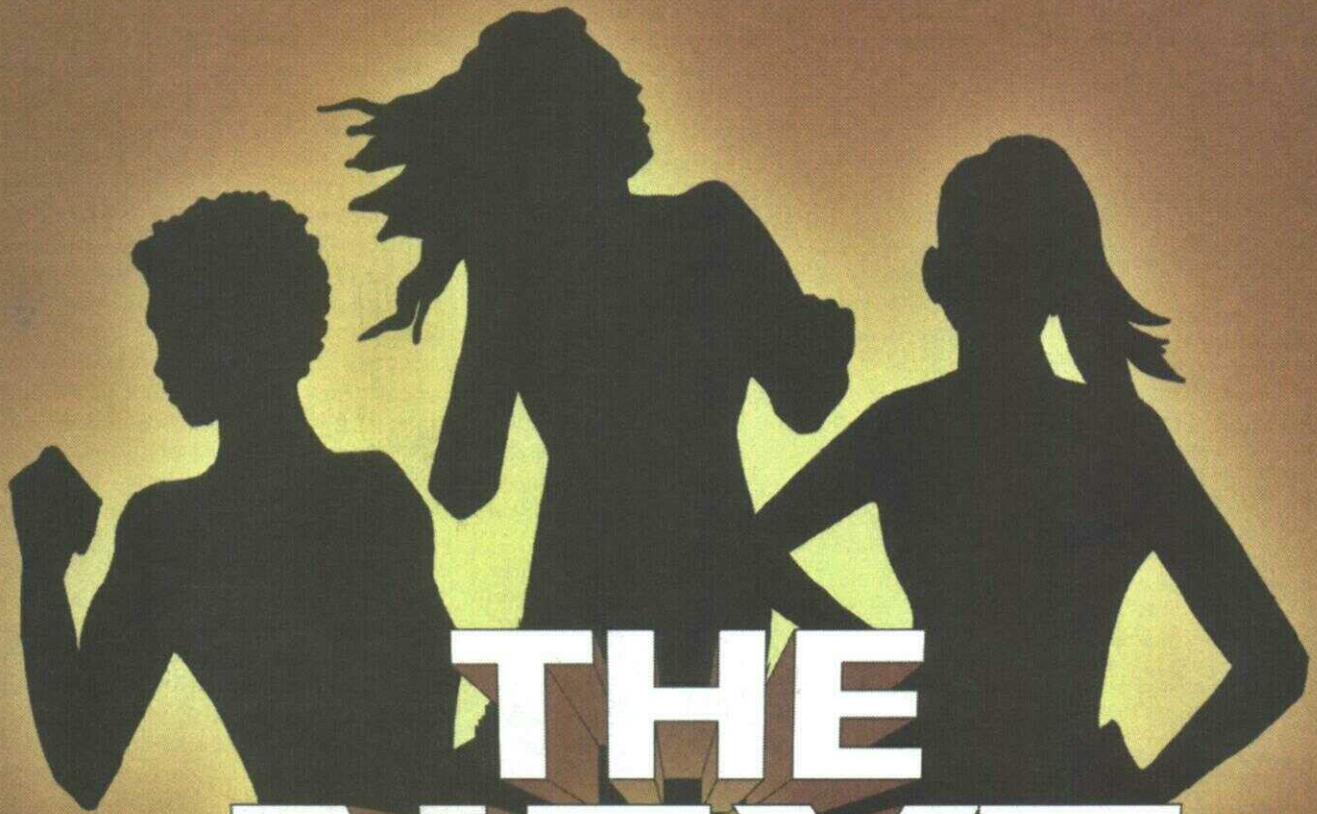


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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

January 8, 2001



THE NEXT WAVE

FEMINISM FOR ALL



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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

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Publisher's Notes

There has been a lot of talk recently about this election being an opportunity to build a new movement. But when I ask people here in Berkeley what they mean by "the movement," they either answer that the movement is the particular cause for which they have the most passion, or they say that there is no movement because the left is hopelessly fragmented.

In These Times is dedicated to supporting "popular movements for social, environmental and economic justice." But can there be a larger movement that incorporates all three? If so, what is it? What is the unifying theme?

They say fools rush in where angels fear to tread, but there are no angels here in the Berkeley office, so here are my thoughts on the major sectors that a new unified movement would encompass.

The struggle for social justice includes the issues of so-called identity politics: women, gays and lesbians, and groups defined by race or ethnicity. The social justice movement also coalesces around specific issues such as human rights, the decriminalization of drugs, keeping abortion legal and the struggle to preserve civil liberties.

This issue of the magazine examines who has been left behind in the feminist movement—and how we must extend economic equality and equal rights to poor women and women of color. At their heart, the issues raised here impact all of us regardless of gender. I believe that a revitalized, unifying movement on the left must wholeheartedly embrace the women's movement.

The movement for economic justice has three focal points: the widening economic divide as the wealthy get wealthier at the expense of everybody else; the growing power of multinational corporations in an era of undemocratic international organizations; the absence of a social safety net to guarantee the basic amenities of normal life—a job at a living wage, housing, health care, childcare, transportation and a good education.

The movement for environmental justice concerns itself with the well-being of the entire planet: the preservation of species and natural habitats and clean air, water and soil.

Besides these feminists, environmentalists and crusaders for economic justice, any new movement must also include peace activists. Historically focused on reducing the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction, today the peace movement insists that the U.S. military budget be reduced. (Remember the "peace dividend"?) More recently it has targeted the role of U.S. corporations as the world's leading arms merchants.

Do these groups have enough in common that we can conceive of one movement that encompasses all four? They certainly are united in what they oppose. Typically, the "enemy" includes multinational corporations, where marketplace values dominate human values, and highly paid corporate lobbyists and political consultants who subvert the democratic process. Aligned with these corporate interests is a conservative culture whose stormtroopers are the religious right. Whether in the area of a woman's right to choose, protection of the environment or growth of the military budget, the transnational corporations and this conservative culture count on each other for uncritical support. (Though their focus is somewhat different, corporate and religious conservatives tend to support each other as a sort of "quid pro quo." Both groups share a culture of patriarchy and autocratic process.)

But to generate new energy, a unifying movement on the left must offer more than

A unifying movement on the left must offer more than a common enemy. It needs to have a common, positive philosophy.

a common enemy. A successful movement that spans all these diverse interests needs to have a common, positive philosophy.

Is it possible to define this positive vision? I believe it is. In the next issue, I'll further explore such a vision. In the meantime, please send me your thoughts (bburnett@inthesetimes.com).

Bob Burnett

In These Times

Volume 25, Number 3

January 8, 2001

www.inthesetimes.com

2 Letters

4 Editorial By Joel Bleifuss

5 News

The Amazon.com union drive, sex slavery exposed in Chicago and the Red Squad makes a comeback.

6 Appall-o-Meter By David Futrelle

11 Viewpoint By Kevin Burke

A global warming bedtime story.

12 Keep Florida Alive

By David Moberg

The election fiasco should lead to wholesale reform.

14 Never Again

By Juan Gonzalez

How Florida disenfranchised black voters.

The Next Wave: Feminism for All

16 Access Denied

By Miranda Kennedy

Abortion may be legal, but can you get one?

19 Under My Skin

By Barbara Seaman

Lessons from the demise of Norplant.

21 Bad Medicine

By Kari Lydersen

For women in prison, health care is dangerous.

24 Bridging the Gap

By David Moberg

Why women still don't get equal pay.

27 The Hip Mama-festo

By Ariel Gore

30 Women of the World

By Tracie McMillan

BOOKS: A *Manifesta* for the third wave.

31 Tongue Tied

By G. Pascal Zachary

BOOKS: The problem of *Language Death*.

32 Getting Bitter

By Hillary Frey

BOOKS: John Lennon lets it blurt.

34 Liberté, Égalité, Vérité

By Carl Bromley

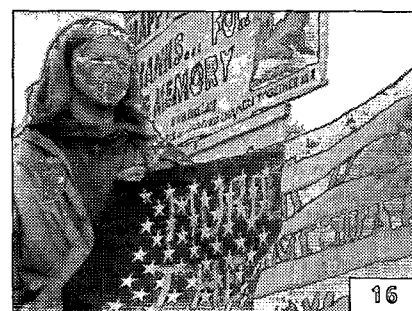
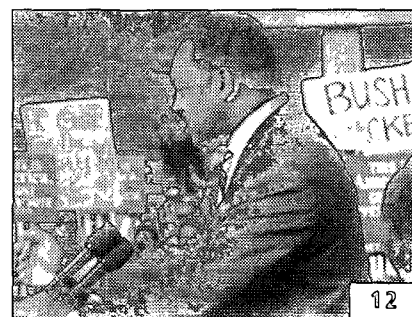
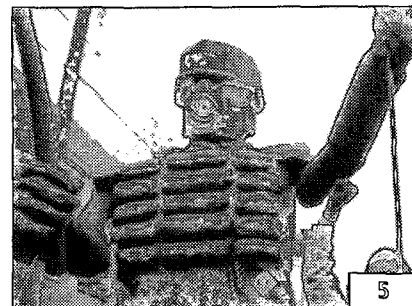
FILM: *Pola X*, *It All Starts Today* and *Human Resources*.

38 Fringe Benefits

By Rick Perlstein

The John Birch Society wants YOU!

Cover Illustration: Elizabeth Mayer



Back to the Balkans

I was amazed and distressed to see Paul Hockenos back on your pages just a couple of issues after Diana Johnstone's and my critiques of his long review of books on the Balkans—critiques that Hockenos failed to rebut, and which showed that he had misrepresented Johnstone's position, dismissed a series of writers critical of NATO as "conspiracy theorists" or too pro-Serb, and revealed himself to be strongly pro-NATO. In that review, he declared that humanitarian motives were the "central" aim of the NATO enterprise, without a shred of evidence, and failed to deal with the massively inhumanitarian effects of the NATO policy before, during and after the war.

In his review and in his most recent article with Drago Hedl ("Leaving the Balkans Behind," November 27), Hockenos employs a quasi-racist "Balkanist" mode of thought. As Maria Todorova has explained in *Imagining the Balkans*, "Balkanism became, in time, a convenient substitute for the emotional discharge that orientalism provided, exempting the West from charges of racism, colonialism, Euro-centrism. ... The Balkans have served as a repository of negative characteristics against which a positive and self-congratulatory image of the 'European' and the 'West' has been constructed."

Progress for Hockenos and Hedl is approximating Western standards. Intriguingly, and exactly as I would expect, Hockenos and Hedl say nothing of the earlier Western support of the Tudjman regime. They do not mention the active U.S. complicity in Tudjman's anti-Serb actions, including the slaughter and expulsion of Serbs in Krajina. They do not mention that the United States sabotaged the International War Crimes Tribunal investigations of that ethnic cleansing. Nor do they ask why the West doesn't treat those expelled Serbs the same way they treated Kosovars expelled from Kosovo. This kind of apologetics is ingrained.

In short, *In These Times* doesn't seem to be bothered by Hockenos' misrepresentations and pro-NATO apologetics and seems bent on continuing his service as its principal Balkans commentator. Were we wrong in thinking that *In These Times* was going to offer its readers an alternative and different voice?

Edward S. Herman
Philadelphia

Paul Hockenos replies: Edward S. Herman consistently misrepresents many of my positions. He seems incapable of comprehending subtle or complex arguments if they don't

fall into the narrow categories with which he is familiar. Even in an article like the one on post-Tudjman Croatia, he insists that I repeat points that I've already made in previous articles if they serve to give the United States or "the West" a black eye, whether they are relevant to the topic at hand or not. For Herman, it's most important to repeat this mantra, ad nauseam.

For the record, I am neither a "NATO apologist" nor an enthusiastic supporter of the 1999 NATO military action against Yugoslavia. During more than 10 years of writing for *In These Times* about the Balkans, I have consistently condemned the Western failure—diplomatic, economic, political and military—to address the expansionist and essentially racist policies of the region's nationalist extremists.

As far as I'm concerned, the Western powers abetted the bloodshed that has drenched the Balkan region and destroyed centuries of ethnic coexistence, a prerequisite for democratic stability in the region. The West as good as gave green lights to the Bosnian Serbs to wipe out Srebrenica and the Croats to ethnically cleanse Krajina and Slavonia, all in order to prepare the map for an easy carve-it-up peace deal. Western policy has taken the path of least resistance at every turn.

The NATO bombing of Yugoslavia was the culmination of a decade of Balkan policy marked by ineptitude, lack of will and moral equivalence. At any one of dozens of points along the way, decisive Western policies and interventions of different kinds could have blocked the hand of nationalist radicals. It was the West's failure to engage and intervene constructively that cost the Bosnians so dearly.

By early 1999, the West (and indeed the entire international community) had waited too long again. The Yugoslavian army, local Serbian paramilitaries and the Arkan killer gangs were terrorizing and ethnically cleansing Kosovo, just as they had Croatia and Bosnia. The same elements acting with exactly the same rationale were operating in Kosovo that perpetrated the massacre at Srebrenica, among dozens and dozens of other atrocities.

The last possible chance to broker some kind of political solution to the Kosovo crisis was Rambouillet. But the Serbs refused to negotiate, convinced that the West was bluffing again and that the Kosovar

Albanians wouldn't sign anyway. Colleagues of mine in Belgrade close to the Serb negotiating team at Rambouillet recently confirmed to me that the Yugoslavian diplomats there had been given a blank sheet of paper by French and Russian officials before U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright even showed up. They were asked to write down what they wanted, as a starting point for negotiations. The sheet came back blank.

In the end, after having procrastinated for so long, there was no choice but to bomb. I certainly had hoped that in the aftermath



Kosovar Albanians would have shown more goodwill to the Serbs than the Serbs had practiced toward them. But they failed that test miserably. (See my "Kosovo Cleansed," December 12, 1999.)

I did not misread Diana Johnstone. She claims that one of the top motives of the NATO action was to position "the West" geostrategically to control access to Caspian Sea oil. I think that humanitarian considerations played a major role in the belated decision to move against Milosevic, as did the possibility of war spilling into Macedonia and Albania, the likelihood of thousands of Kosovar refugees streaming toward Western Europe and NATO's interest in creating a new legitimacy for itself in the post-Cold War period. A permanently destabilized Balkan region that disrupts trade routes and throws a wrench into the process of European integration benefits no one.

The screwiest of Herman's charges is this "Balkanist" bit. It is utterly ludicrous to put me in the category of those people who imply that through some kind of ingrained or innate character the peoples of Southeastern Europe are historically fated or genetically driven to butcher one another. I have reported on pro-democracy student movements in Serbia, punk scenes in Slovenia, multicultural bastions in Bosnia and many, many other examples of tolerance and political creativity in the

region. I am convinced that the wars in Bosnia and Croatia were among the most absurd ever fought. The peoples of Southeastern Europe have in the past and must in the future coexist peacefully with one another. I am convinced that they are fully capable of doing this, and that the international community through conflict prevention and crisis management mechanisms, like the work of the OSCE, can aid them in this endeavor.

At the same time, there is a virulent strain of nationalism and a certain mentality that recently have manifest themselves in the Balkans as nowhere else. By this, I refer to a propensity to buy into howling conspiracy theories, to justify one wrong with another, an obsession with historical myth, and a blind, often xenophobic loyalty to the nation. These unfavorable qualities are not restricted to the peoples of the Balkans nor do they apply to every person who happens to live between Ljubljana and Thessaloniki. Nevertheless, it is impossible to understand the recent conflicts in this area without understanding something of this side of the regional character, call it what you will. Whether I use the term "Balkan" or not doesn't affect my analysis in the least.

As to the charge of a pro-Western bias, I have to plead guilty. Yes, the countries in the Balkans would be more stable, prosperous and happy were they to develop democratic political cultures complete with the rule of law, respect for human rights, independent media and civil society. These are the values that underpin the European Union and have contributed to five decades of peace and economic development in Western Europe. The single most critical long-term goal of the international community must be to integrate the states of Southeastern Europe into these structures as soon as possible. This is one of the tasks of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, the brainchild of Germany's Green Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer.

I am at a complete loss to imagine the alternative that Herman poses to this scenario or what he considers to be progressive non-Western values in the Balkan region. Perhaps he sees some enduring value in the Cold War Communist systems or something mystical and unique in ethnic nationalist ideologies that is worth preserving against the dreaded "homogenizing" EU bureaucracy that far-right and old-school ex-Communist parties rail against.

Most Green and Social Democratic parties across Europe enthusiastically support some version of Fischer's radical vision of a federal-

ist Europe—from the Atlantic to the Urals. It is far-sighted, imaginative strategies like Fischer's that constitute a progressive politics today in Europe.

Just the Facts?

Out of a deep respect for who Paul Krassner used to be, I have refrained from responding to his ill-conceived, ill-advised and factually inaccurate mishmash of a review and article about my film *Steal This Movie* ("Steal This Review," October 2.) However, enough is enough.

How dare Krassner reply to Stew Albert's letter by citing facts and making up quotes from me ("Letters," November 27). There is no possible way I would say to him that I showed Anita Hoffman "significant parts of the film ... in Toronto when she visited." We were still filming, and significant parts of the film were not even edited. I never sent her "sections for her pleasure," since her health was failing and she requested I not do so. I resent the distortion of the truth.

I am a longtime supporter of *In These Times*. But what happened to basic fact-checking? Among the numerous factual errors in the piece:

1. Krassner says Gerry Lefcourt is portrayed as defending Abbie at the Chicago Seven Trial. What movie was that in? There clearly is an actor portraying William Kunstler, the quote is from a Kunstler speech, and the actor is credited as playing Kunstler in the credits.

2. Krassner makes reference to only five defendants at the Chicago Seven Trial. Wrong. Look at the film and try counting.

3. Krassner's comments about lack of distribution convey a total ignorance about how the process works. Independent films are often filmed and finished before screening for distributors in order to protect the creative and political integrity of the film. That was the case here, and frankly Krassner's comments are embarrassing in their ignorance about how independent films work.

4. The repeating of gossip that I was trying to cut Johanna Lawrenson out of the film is untenable. Why then hire a wonderful actress like Jeanne Tripplehorn? Why have scene after scene with her and Abbie? Why have her helping to save Abbie's life? And why credit her in the end of the film as continuing to work on the Hoffman foundation? I admire tremendously the work Johanna has done and wish her the best in future efforts.

Finally, and most importantly, I find it disgusting for Krassner to attack my film as a marketing plan because I was able to get

the distributor to screen the movie for more than 30 progressive groups around the country that used the film to raise funds and awareness. These are real groups, struggling with real issues, not sitting on the sidelines as Paul has chosen to do, firing bullets because they were not given their appropriate mention in the movie.

I have made numerous social/political films, from *The Burning Bed* to movies about Amnesty International, teen-age pregnancy and the juvenile justice system. I will continue to do so. But it saddens me when such a terrific publication like *In These Times* gives such extensive space to a personal attack without any political elements. Like the movie, hate the movie, but deal with the issues that the film raises, not sulking because certain people weren't included.

Robert Greenwald
Culver City, California

Agreeing to Disagree

I have to tell you that I am very impressed by your publication and have relied on it for years.

I am a former Marxist-Leninist who has moved way beyond that worldview and strongly opposes it today. However, it is not nostalgia that keeps me as a subscriber. Nor have I traded any youthful zealotry for weary cynicism. I genuinely find *In These Times* to be the most insightful of all the so-called leftist publications. Despite frequent disagreement with *In These Times'* worldview and analysis, it still provides new perspectives, new angles, new ways of looking at an issue that do not come from mere hidebound ideological rants.

In These Times contributes to a national dialogue, and I do learn from it. Salim Muwakkil's recent assessment of the changes taking place with the Nation of Islam is an especially thoughtful and useful report ("We Are Family," November 27). It is that analysis, in particular, that prompts me to let you know that you are sincerely appreciated, even in the most unexpected of quarters.

Peter Signorelli
Morristown, New Jersey

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Rules of the Game

By Joel Bleifuss

One of Ralph Nader's rationales for his presidential campaign was that there is no difference between Democrats and Republicans. A look at where big business invested its campaign dollars shows that the CEOs who steer the world's largest corporations couldn't disagree more. Thanks to them, George Bush out-raised and outspent Al Gore by about 50 percent. Now, in the aftermath of the most expensive national election ever, the political players are calculating the return on their investment.

In terms of immediate profit, honors go to the corporations that own the nation's television stations. According to the Pew Research Center for People and the Press, 65 percent of Americans relied on television for their news about the election. What's more, according to a survey by the Annenberg Public Policy Center, no matter how much network television news people watched, they remained equally ignorant of how Gore and Bush stood on the issues.

This is not surprising, given that the nightly newscasts of ABC, CBS and NBC cut their coverage of the presidential race by 40 percent from 1988. Indeed, the networks' corporate parents have a vested interest in keeping the public ignorant about candidates running for public office: The less a network or station covers a political race, the more candidates must rely on buying television commercials to get their message across to voters. Media expenditures are the single largest budget item for all campaigns, accounting for up to 60 percent of spending in competitive races. And this year candidates spent a record \$1 billion buying air time.

Forget televised debates. Viewers would have been better informed if instead of candidate soundbites we got hard numbers. A simple chart could have shown where, for example, the tobacco industry invested its campaign dollars. Bush was the industry's largest individual recipient. All told, the tobacco companies invested \$6.8 million in this year's

campaign, 82 percent of which went to Republicans. (That rounds out to \$45 for each of the approximately 150,000 Americans who will die this year from smoking-related lung cancer.)

Instead of asking the candidates what they would do to preserve the environment, a chart of political giving from the energy and natural resources industries would show that they backed Bush to the tune of \$2.7 million, as opposed to \$300,000 for Gore.

Money isn't the only form of political capital. Savvy organizing, strategic planning and smart politics do matter, as the Christian right well knows. It continues to wield clout way beyond its numbers. On Election Day, 14 percent of voters identified themselves as members of the religious right, and 80 percent of them voted for Bush. In every close state that Bush won, his support from the religious right was greater than his margin of victory.

And once again, the Christian Coalition was out in force, distributing tens of millions of its "voter guides" that rate candidates on issues like "abortion

on demand," "homosexual adoption of children" and a "flat-rate federal income tax." Noting that the next president could appoint three Supreme Court justices and 180 federal judges, Pat Robertson explained on his Web site, "I want to see a future where a righteous public servant occupies the White House and fills federal positions of power with men and women committed to Godly principles."

How well Bush lives up to that promise remains to be seen. He isn't the Christian right's ideal ideal candidate. As governor, he refused to attend the Texas GOP Convention because he didn't want to be associated with the extremists who con-

Savvy organizing, strategic planning and smart politics do matter, as the Christian right well knows.

trol the party. Yet the God squad made a decision to compromise principles and back Bush wholeheartedly. And Bush captured the White House with the dollars of Corporate America and the votes of the Christian right. He will do his best to keep those key constituencies happy. That's how politics works.

Do those of us on the left, who counted for about 20 percent of voters on Election Day, have a political lesson to learn from CEOs and right-wing Christians? At least some of us do. ■

Terry LaBan



Amazon Workers on the Move

A union drive launches at the Internet's premier retailer

By David Moberg

To many workers, the "new economy" is starting to look a lot like the old one. With once high-flying Internet companies crashing earthward and Wall Street pressuring them to show profits, entrepreneurs who promised a revolutionized workplace and stock-option riches for all have turned into tough-minded bean-counters looking for ways to shave costs at the expense of employees. That has prompted some new economy workers to think about organizing themselves into unions. In turn, the barons of the new economy are responding with classic anti-union tactics.

In mid-November organizers launched campaigns among two different sets of workers at Amazon.com, the premier Internet retailer. The experience of Amazon workers in Seattle, who are organizing with the assistance of WashTech, an innovative Communications Workers local, demonstrates the limits of the Internet as a source of high-skill jobs in a global economy that has relocated much manufacturing to lower-wage havens.

There had been little pro-union activity at most Internet companies. Their often youthful workers saw themselves catching a new economic wave that they could surf to quick fortunes while working in a casual setting with computer technologies. But working in an Amazon warehouse or being a customer service representative is not much different from other warehouse or customer relations jobs. Indeed, these "e-commerce" jobs often offer lower and less stable incomes and impose more demanding and unpredictable routines than their conventional equivalents.

One middle-aged warehouse employee in Kansas—call him Ralph, since he fears using his real name after the company threatened to fire a co-worker if he ever mentioned the word "union" again—had worked at an electrical

equipment factory for many years until it moved to Mexico last year. He previously had earned more than \$13 an hour, but Amazon pays him less than \$10, and he has endured mandatory schedules of 50 to 60 hours a week around Christmas as well as periods in the summer when he was lucky to work 20 hours a week. Since Amazon's stock price has plummeted, his stock options—like those of most workers hired in the past year and a half—are worthless. "I'm a hard worker," Ralph says. "But what they want is damn ridiculous for the pay and the hours."

In Amazon's hometown of Seattle, college-educated workers like 23-year-old Susan—again, she asked that her real name not be used—work as customer service representatives for around \$13 an hour (with starting pay at \$11). She

came to Amazon seduced by the Internet hype and by seeing "a lot of my friends who'd been there for years who were millionaires." But like other customer service representatives, she is upset not simply by the worthless options and inadequate pay, but also with the continued bonuses to top executives that contrast starkly with the customer service representatives' \$50 Christmas bonus—down from \$200 last year—in the form of a taxable Amazon gift certificate. She's also distressed with mandatory overtime, declining professionalism, low morale and the "constant fight between productivity and quality," with quality losing out "because higher-ups want to see numbers before anything else."

Jobs in Seattle are threatened not only by new, lower-wage service centers



LOREN CALLAHAN/NEWSMAKERS

Seattle, Round Two: After protesters successfully shut down the World Trade Organization in Seattle last year, *Adbusters* magazine asked its readers to designate an annual "International Day of Solidarity Against Corporate Globalization." Readers suggested November 30 in honor of the Seattle protests, and N30, as the day is now known, became a highly anticipated event among anti-globalization activists.

This year's N30 celebration drew 2,000 marchers to the streets of Seattle to raise awareness about globalization's harmful effects. The protest was mostly a peaceful, low-key affair; around 8 p.m., however, the "quiet riot" turned violent.

When Seattle police tried to sweep the streets of lingering protesters, 50 activists

gathered near Westlake Plaza, a bustling shopping district, and refused to leave. Hundreds of police descended on the crowd, which had grown to about 200 people, and ordered them to disperse. But protesters at the scene say there was nowhere to go; police had the area completely surrounded.

According to police, protesters turned violent, hurling rocks, bottles and firecrackers at the officers. Police retaliated by firing pepper spray into the crowd and arrested 140 people, including 10 legal observers from the National Lawyers Guild and the executive director of the King County Labor Commission.

At least six protesters were being held on felony charges at press time. Attorneys for the remaining protesters expect their misdemeanor charges will be dropped. **Evan Endicott**

in West Virginia and North Dakota, but also by Amazon's opening earlier this year of an e-mail service center in India, staffed in collaboration with an Indian firm by highly educated workers paid less than one-tenth the Seattle wage. Amazon has already shifted most warehouse work from locations like Seattle to smaller cities in Kansas, Kentucky and Nevada, where prevailing wages are lower and, in at least two cases, big factories recently shut down and moved overseas.

WashTech had a low-level presence at Amazon for the past couple of years, but new insecurity, job pressures and management unresponsiveness to workers' suggestions triggered a movement among the more than 400 customer service rep-

resentatives, according to WashTech organizer Marcus Courtney. "These people are organizing because they're committed to the company and its future success," he says, "but they feel they need a true representative voice so they can deliver the quality of service necessary for Amazon to be profitable in the future."

Amazon has responded to the organizing drive by offering some perks—such as rescinding a charge for massages provided to overstressed workers—and by holding anti-union meetings. Despite fears of retaliation, this strategy appears to have backfired. "I love the company, but they're making bad decisions," says Scott Alan Buss, a self-described right-winger who initially opposed the union. "They are a cutting-edge e-company and also a throwback to old 1930s anti-unionism. They keep trying to label the union movement as an evil outside force, when

this entire movement is driven 100 percent from inside. If anyone is to blame for someone like me being out there supporting a union, it's management."

Amazon CEO Jeffrey Bezos argues that his "associates" don't need a union because they are owners. But that hasn't stopped Amazon from resorting to conventional corporate tactics—attacking unions as "for-profit businesses" that foment conflict among workers, eliminate employee individuality and may deliver less in a contract than workers have now. WashTech pressure did force Amazon to back off its demand that customer service representatives send an anti-union message to customers who inquire about the organizing campaign.

Meanwhile, organizers are also at work among the roughly 5,000 full-time Amazon warehouse employees (now swelled to as many as three times that



Appall-o-Meter

By David Futrelle

SWAT-ing Fries **8.4**

When 12-year-old Ansche Hedgepeth was discovered violating the Metro's "zero tolerance" policy by Washington transit police, she was arrested, handcuffed and taken off to a detention center. But Hedgepeth wasn't holding drugs or a gun: she was eating French fries, and just happened to be caught in the Great Snack Scofflaw Crackdown of 2000.

After hearing numerous commuter complaints about snacking on Metro trains, the *Washington Post* reports, Metro Transit Police Chief Barry McDevitt decided that enough was enough and launched a week-long crackdown on snackers involving a dozen undercover officers (who apparently don't have anything better to do). In all, 35 violators were nabbed by police.

While most of the adults were simply given citations, juveniles charged with criminal offenses have to be taken into custody. And, as the chief told the *Post*, "Anyone taken into custody has to be handcuffed for officer safety" because youngsters "can kill you too." (Though probably not, even the chief would admit, with a side order of fries.)

Hedgepeth, who some say was targeted for arrest because she is black, is being forced to atone for her, er, crime, with community service and counseling. She may

also face disciplinary actions at school for her reckless snacking, the *Post* reports.

Hard-Knock Life **6.8**

The BBC is in hot water after one of its film crews left a child pretending to be a homeless African orphan on the doorstep of a London-area resident—as part of an ill-conceived, *Candid-Camera*-style practical joke. According to London's *Daily Telegraph*, Gillian Dumbarton answered the door of her Croxley Green home to find a man claiming to be raising money for African children. After she gave the man a one-pound note, the *Telegraph* reports, "a wooden box was unloaded from a lorry, out of which came a 7-year-old actor pretending to be an African child. As the boy ran toward her, she was told she would have to keep him."

After the film crew came out of hiding and revealed it had all been a joke, an angry Dumbarton called police. "I've got a sense of humor," she explained, "but this was in such bad taste when you think of all the disasters that have hit people in Africa."

The BBC has apologized for the incident, saying it didn't mean any offense.

Say What? **7.9**

When Bill Clinton decided to make some critical remarks about Vietnam's lack of human rights in a recent speech at

Hanoi's National University, the translator for the Vietnamese government seemed to have wax in his ears. "Most of Clinton's uncontroversial remarks were rendered clearly," Reuters reports, "but the translation became hopelessly garbled when Clinton touched on human rights."

Clinton noted, for example, that "only you can decide how to weave individual liberties and human rights into the rich and strong fabric of Vietnamese national identity." But the translator rendered his comments as "only you can decide (pause) on how to live with the issue, um, (pause) in the issue that human rights in Vietnam and in the society then you make a decision on your own."

Not that Clinton was exactly forthcoming himself, pointedly refusing to apologize for American actions during the Vietnam War.



TERRY LABAN

number for the annual holiday rush, according to organizer estimates). The Prewitt Organizing Fund, an independent group that works for various unions, began exploring possibilities at Amazon a year ago. Prewitt President Duane Stillwell says that from the beginning they envisioned attempting to organize all Amazon distribution centers in the United States in one coordinated effort, exploiting the potential of disrupting Amazon's crucial Christmas season to win union recognition. Unions in Germany, France and England are now also working with Prewitt on organizing Amazon distribution center workers there.

Prewitt organizers had been cooperating with the United Food and Commercial Workers over the summer. But just before the mid-November launch, the UFCW cut off its relationship with Prewitt. UFCW spokesman Greg Denier cites disagreement over contract terms and the union's post-election anger that Stillwell had signed a "labor for Nader" ad. Although the UFCW leafleted some plants and says it is organizing Amazon centers on its own, Prewitt organizers say that they have seen no UFCW organizers working since the initial leafleting.

Without a formal union partner, Prewitt's promising start at Amazon could be greatly hampered at the start of a major labor foray into the new economy, just as one of its leading businesses demonstrates to their employees many of the bad habits of the old. ■

Slaves of Chicago

International sex trafficking is becoming big business

By Charity Crouse

CHICAGO—This city has become the focus of growing investigation into the sex trafficking of foreign women and girls—what the CIA calls a "modern-day form of slavery" that yields \$7 billion a year in profits.

In October, Chicago Police began investigating prostitution in the Chinatown neighborhood. Officers called eight massage parlors advertising in a local publication and found that all of them had women working as prostitutes. After further investigation, officers learned the women had been brought to Chicago from rural China, after being promised high-paying jobs in America. Upon arrival, the women were forced into prostitution in order to pay off their \$60,000 "travel fee." The owners of two parlors were arrested for soliciting prostitution and several of the women now languish in custody as law enforcement officials and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) decide their fate.

The Chinatown case comes on the heels of a Chicago trial that yielded the first conviction for trafficking in women and girls in nearly two decades.

That case began in 1995, when Alexander Mishulovich and his associates approached five young women on the streets of Riga, Latvia with flattery and an offer of employment in the United States. While the average Latvian makes \$200 to \$350 a month, Mishulovich promised each of the women more than \$60,000 a year. All they had to do was dance in "upscale" nightclubs completely clothed, lie at the embassy about their purpose for traveling to the United States, and hand over half of their earnings until they paid off their transportation debts.

The women jumped at the opportunity, but soon discovered the offer that sounded too good to be true was

just that. When they arrived in Chicago in November 1997, they were told they would be dancing topless. Their identification papers were taken and they were required to give all but \$20 of the \$200 to \$600 they made nightly to Mishulovich. "He inflated the costs and kept building their debt," explains FBI Special Agent Michael E. Brown. "He told them he needed the money to pay living expenses and bribes to police and politicians."

The women were not allowed to leave the one-bedroom apartment Mishulovich had rented in suburban Mt. Prospect, Illinois, except to work at various strip clubs, including the Admiral Theater in Chicago and the Skybox in Harvey, Illinois. They were physically beaten and sexually abused.

Such treatment continued until June 1998, when FBI agents arrested four of Mishulovich's associates after following leads from U.S. Embassy officials in Latvia. Mishulovich and the others were indicted for a variety of offenses, including conspiracy to commit peonage, fraud and obstruction of justice. Four men were convicted and currently await sentencing; Mishulovich fled the country and remains a fugitive. All of the women were deported to Latvia.

The women in Chicago are victims of a harrowing global trend. According to the United Nations, trafficking in women and girls is expected to surpass trafficking in drugs and guns as the world's leading illegal industry in a few years. "Lives Together, Worlds Apart," a report released by the U.N. Population Fund in September, puts the number of women trafficked around the world at more than 4 million annually—half are girls between the ages of 5 and 15.

Operations similar to the ones in Chicago have been uncovered all over the United States, which receives as many as 50,000 trafficking victims a year, according to the CIA. More than 30 women and girls from Mexico were trafficked into Florida and the Carolinas between 1996 and 1998 after being promised jobs as domestic servants. As many as 10 women were taken from the Czech Republic to New York in 1998 under the guise of working secretarial jobs. In 1995, 70 Thai women were lured to various U.S. cities with promises of high-paying employment. In all of these cases, the women were forced into prosti-

Independence Day

On November 27, misdemeanor charges were dismissed against 38 protesters at the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia last August. One hundred others accepted a pre-trial offer from the district attorney's office guaranteeing their records would be cleared after six months of good behavior.

Earlier in the month, Ruckus Society director John Sellers, who was arrested on August 2 and charged with 14 misdemeanors, was cleared of all wrongdoing. Sellers initially was held on \$1 million bail, an unprecedented amount for such charges; yet when the so-called "ringleader" of the Philadelphia protests showed up in court, prosecutors said they didn't have enough evidence to try the case.

These events dealt a serious blow to the Philadelphia police, who are being subjected to increasing criticism.

Evan Endicott

tution. Sometimes, as with the women from Mexico, they were given no hope for emancipation. In other cases, women were promised freedom once they "worked off" their debts; the women from Thailand were offered release once they had sex with 400 to 500 men.

"Many women who are trafficked are attracted to advertisements for a better life," says Theresa Loar, director of the Interagency Council on Women, a group established in 1995 to implement the mandates of the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women.

Traffickers capitalize on the lack of viable economic opportunities available to women in their countries of origin to convince them to leave. Some girls are bought from poor families in vulnerable communities. "Traffickers turn up in a rural community during a drought or before a harvest, when food is scarce, and persuade poor couples [to] sell their daughters for small amounts of money," says the U.N. Population Fund report. Other girls are kidnapped from their homes and orphanages.

Law enforcement officials contend that the United States is currently ill-equipped

to deal with traffickers, even after their operations have been uncovered.

The only legal tools for combating traffickers are antiquated anti-peonage laws, where the statutory maximum for sale into involuntary servitude is 10 years in prison per count. In contrast, the statutory maximum for dealing 10 grams of LSD or distributing a kilo of heroin is life in prison.

A review of sentences handed down in recent trafficking cases illustrates the inadequacy of current legislation. In Los Angeles, where a Chinese woman was kidnapped, raped and burned with cigarettes, the traffickers received three to four years each. A man who forced Russian and Ukrainian women to work as prostitutes in his Bethesda, Maryland massage parlor was merely fined after a plea bargain restricted him from operating a future business in Montgomery County. In a Florida case where women were raped, confined, prostituted, assaulted and forced to undergo abortions, defendants received sentences ranging from 2.5 to 6.5 years (although the head of the operation was sentenced to 15 years).

There is currently little support or protection available for trafficked

women who escape or are discovered by law enforcement officials. According to a CIA report, no shelters or comprehensive service providers currently exist in the United States for victims of trafficking. Local shelters are often apprehensive about accommodating trafficked women due to language and other cultural barriers, and most shelters lack adequate security to prevent the violent retaliation that often follows a woman's escape from her captors.

According to the CIA report, trafficked women are often deported or arrested because the INS is legally required to treat them the same as "other undocumented workers [who] have broken the law." In some cases, the INS can give a victim of trafficking a special type of visa used for witnesses in federal criminal cases; however, the INS is only permitted to give out 200 such visas a year. As a result, "the No. 1 difficulty in apprehending traffickers [is] getting the women to cooperate," Brown says.

Congress recently took steps to improve cooperation between victims and law enforcement officials by signing the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in late September. The bill calls for the investigation of more stringent penalties and the authorization of 5,000 so-called T-visas ("trafficking visas") for women and girls who have been sexually trafficked.

According to Brown, meetings between government officials from Scandinavian countries, the former Soviet Union and Eastern European nations are encouraging law enforcement agencies to work cooperatively to target organized crime rings with local links to prostitution.

Ultimately, prevention is the key, and it begins with improving conditions for all women throughout the world. "Prevention of trafficking must incorporate economic alternatives for women in the source countries," concludes the CIA report. "Poverty and high unemployment rates pose hardships on women. Women who have jobs must contend with sexual harassment in the workplace. It is this destitution and discrimination that make women especially vulnerable to traffickers' false promises of good jobs abroad." ■

THIS Bizarro World

by TOM TOMORROW

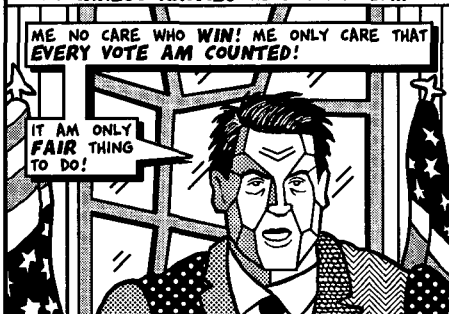
ON BIZARRO WORLD, THINGS TURNED OUT SOMEWHAT DIFFERENTLY--BEGINNING WHEN BIZARRO KATHERINE HARRIS CERTIFIED HER STATE'S ELECTORAL VOTES IN FAVOR OF BIZARRO AL GORE AS SOON AS SHE WAS LEGALLY ABLE...



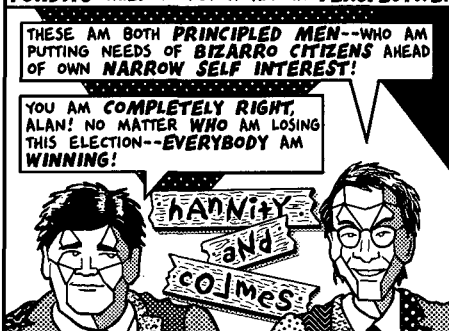
BIZARRO GEORGE BUSH QUICKLY WENT TO COURT TO CHALLENGE THE RECOUNT'S LEGALITY.



DESPITE HIS VICTORY, BIZARRO GORE CONTINUED TO PUSH FOR A RECOUNT IN SEVERAL COUNTIES WHERE VOTING IRREGULARITIES WERE SUSPECTED...



MEANWHILE, CALM AND RATIONAL BIZARRO WORLD PUNDITS TRIED TO PUT IT ALL IN PERSPECTIVE.



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Red Squad Redux

Chicago police want a consent decree lifted. Then they can do more spying.

By Ben Winters

CHICAGO—Forget Jacob Marley. This holiday season the Chicago Police Department is entertaining its own ghost from the past.

The department's notorious Subversive Activities Unit (commonly known as the Red Squad) was a Richard J. Daley-era corps that kept dossiers on more than 250,000 private individuals and lawful organizations in systematic violation of the First Amendment. The Red Squad was killed by a court-ordered "consent decree" in 1981, but two closely related cases are testing just how deeply it was buried.

In March 1997, the city petitioned the District Court to relax the decree, which proscribes law enforcement from gathering intelligence on or disrupting any First Amendment activities unrelated to a criminal investigation. The thrust of the suit, rejected in September 1999 and currently on appeal, is that the police department has cleaned up its act: "There is no likelihood," reads the petition, "of the City's returning to the activities that prompted" the decree.

Not so, says a coalition of activist groups who have taken the city to court, charging "political spying and disruption" by Chicago police during the 1996 Democratic Convention. Officers allegedly stormed the Active Resistance Counterconvention, after extensive surveillance of its organizers; pepper-sprayed the participants and destroyed personal property; and subjected several in attendance to lengthy interrogations. Besides suing for damages, the plaintiffs have asked the court to order more rigorous enforcement of the consent decree—just the opposite of what the city's petition requests.

Both cases have completed final arguments and are awaiting verdicts. The groups claiming consent decree violations expect a victory in their case would seriously dampen the department's chances of having it relaxed. "One of the reasons the city gave for their motion to modify [the decree] was saying, 'we haven't violated it in 15 years,'" says Richard Gutman, lead counsel in the suit against the city.

Police department officials would not comment on pending deliberations, but officers testified in court that if somebody raided the Counterconvention, it wasn't them.

Gutman rejects this claim, pointing out that, by all accounts, large numbers of officers were amassed in the area where the raid took place. "They've admitted there were 100 to

refused to identify themselves as they're required to do," Speedwell says. "They covered up or removed their badges. They pepper-sprayed people. At least two people required medical attention."

Speedwell also says that, for weeks in advance of the raid, police were keeping careful tabs on the various dissidents, anarchists and independent journalists attending the convention: "They would turn up their scanners and their radios so that we could hear them," she recalls. "They constantly monitored our radios."

"The consent decree was supposed to draw the line between legitimate intelligence gathering on criminal activity and improper political snooping," Gutman says. "The bottom line is that [the city's motion would] remove all



Chicago police blanketed the city during the 1996 Democratic Convention.

150 police officers in the area," he says. "They said they were using an area which centered on the ballroom [site of the Counterconvention] as a massing point. The areas of their standby were one block south, one block north, four blocks east and four blocks west ... of where the Counterconvention was taking place."

Vic Speedwell, one of the Counterconvention's organizers, says police arrived at the ballroom en masse, with no warning or identification. "The cops walked in through the backdoor, told everyone not to move, and

meaningful restrictions on intelligence gathering and file keeping. In their briefs, they said they wanted to gather information on the ideas of political extremists, and they [wouldn't] have to show that it's necessary for a criminal investigation."

The city's motion to modify the decree asserts that it hampers their efforts to squash gangs and gather information on "extremists." In other words, the police claim they haven't been monitoring lawful free speech activity. But they can't wait to get started. ■

Patent Pirates?

Argentina and the United States clash over drug sales at the WTO

By Travis Lea

BUENOS AIRES—Long lines of sick and elderly Argentines form outside government drug distribution centers here every day. Many more don't even bother; even with subsidies, they cannot afford the medicine they need. And if the U.S. government gets its way in an ongoing dispute before the World Trade Organization, even more Argentines will be left without access to vital medicine.

Pharmaceutical patent protection has been one of the most important trade issues of the past decade between the United States and Argentina. The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the government entity that tends to U.S. business interests internationally, has targeted Argentina and its neighbors in the trade bloc Mercosur (which includes Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Chile) as pirates who don't respect international accords on medical patents.

Because there is free trade between Mercosur members, businesses that establish operations in one country gain immediate and unfettered access to the other Mercosur markets. As a result, countries with strict intellectual property laws (like Brazil) attract foreign pharmaceutical companies, who then sell their patent-protected products throughout Mercosur. Argentina considers such practices to be a monopoly, and has established laws that guarantee its local labs access to foreign-manufactured pharmaceutical recipes. Not surprisingly, the drug companies are crying foul.

The U.S. Trade Representative has been pushing these South American countries to pass patent laws that grant exclusive manufacturing rights to the U.S. companies that invented the drugs; companies such as Novartis, Glaxo and Bristol-Meyers. "They want to end up with a monopoly and charge the highest possible prices," says Pablo Challu, director of CILFA, the Argentine pharmaceutical lobby.

When pharmaceutical companies sell their drugs in a given country, they must supply the recipes to the local government. Many Argentine labs use formulas supplied by their government to manufacture drugs that were developed in Europe and the United States. The government can cite any number of reasons for giving away a drug recipe, from urgent medical necessity to anti-monopoly practices. American companies claim international law provides greater protection for their inventions than Argentines cede in their interpretation, and are seeking to stop the spread of their recipes via the WTO.

One of the most important issues in the dispute is compulsive licensing, which would allow the government to

Argentina, since it defends the absolute right of Argentines to have access to a needed medicine. Challu says foreign companies have the right not to produce their drugs here, but asks, "What if someone wants to manufacture in Argentina? As long as his rights are respected and the company is paying royalties—the [compulsive licensing] clause is totally logical."

Another controversial clause stipulates a certain percentage of local drug production to protect national industry. According to Argentine Congressman Juan-Pablo Baylac, who is on a committee to add more protection in local legislation, countries without such measures, such as Chile and Mexico, have seen a "near disappearance of national industry."

The Southern Cone region already has some of the highest drug prices in the world, which is a deadly mix when combined with poor government health care and low incomes. Nonetheless, American companies are pushing hard to ensure long-range profits with a strict reading of laws that would prohibit a licensed company from exporting its product. For example, this could prevent a Brazilian company with a patent license from exporting a drug to its neighbor and free trade partner Argentina, eliminating competition for the U.S. drug maker here.

The conflicts and debates surrounding medical patents, which are also leaving African nations without desperately needed AIDS medications, will have far-reaching effects, says Carlos Correa, a law professor at the University of Buenos Aires who specializes in intellectual property. He says governments that are too beholden to business interests, like the United States, have distorted the original intent of patents. "[In the United States] patents are used simply as an export monopoly," he says. "Patents have a more important role than that, which is to promote the health industry and the transfer of technology."

The United States is trying to use the international courts to bully smaller Latin American countries, Challu says. "Our law meets the requirements of the WTO," he insists, "and we will not accept pressure from the United States." ■



STEVE ANDERSON

give a recipe away to a local laboratory if the drug developer refuses to sell it, and if the government deems that the local lab can produce the same quality medicine as the developing lab while paying royalties to the foreign company. This mechanism protects consumers from monopolies and keeps local labs in business. It's no minor detail: The pharmaceutical industry is worth \$5 billion annually in Argentina alone.

American companies fear that language in the compulsive licensing clause could be interpreted in a way that would force them to build factories in

Global Warming Bedtime Story

Laura, I'm going to tell you a story about something that just happened that you should remember when you grow up.

Once upon a time, in November 2000, just after your first birthday, a bunch of very smart people met in a place called Holland to plan how to save your future. Of course your name was never actually mentioned, but I'm sure they were all thinking of you and the other 1-year-olds all over the planet who would live in the world they were planning.

These people were delegates to the United Nations World Climate Change Conference. (That's a lot of words. Let's just call it the UNWCCC.) The delegates all had spent years studying and arguing about how to reduce the amount of gross stuff called carbon dioxide that comes from cars and power plants. Most scientists agreed that putting lots more carbon dioxide in the air was not a good thing. And they were very worried that it could turn out to be a really bad thing.

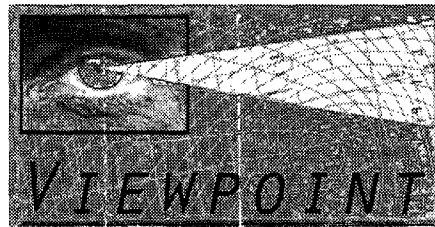
During the 20th century (it ended three months after you were born) people added lots more carbon dioxide and other nasty chemicals called greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. While this was happening, the earth's average temperature increased by a single degree. One degree might not sound like much, but it usually takes a thousand years for the earth's temperature to change by a degree.

Scientists were worried that something bad called "global warming" was happening. So they had a meeting in 1997 and agreed to the "Kyoto Protocol." A protocol is what grown-ups argue about before they argue about whether to actually do anything. This one called for all the rich countries, the ones with the best toys, to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 7 percent from what they had emitted in 1990. After Kyoto everybody was very excited because the nations of the world were well on their way to arguing about doing something about global warming.

Then they had the conference in Holland that I was talking about. It was very important. All the delegates there were going to agree on how to meet the

targets and timetables of Kyoto. If you say targets and timetables a bunch of times, it will make you feel smart.

You have to understand that you are a very lucky girl. Very few little girls get to be born in the United States, but Americans like us generated a quarter of



the entire world's greenhouse gas emissions. So all of us here in the United States had a chance to do the most to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. And our negotiators—those very smart people—had a plan to show the world how serious we were about preventing global warming.

Some people didn't think we were serious, because even though we had promised to make less greenhouse gases, since 1990 we had actually increased the amount of greenhouse gases we add to the atmosphere by 11 percent. They said we were almost 20 percent off our target and heading in the wrong direction. But they weren't counting the right way.

You see, we live in a big country with lots of trees. And trees absorb carbon dioxide. In fact, when experts on global warming talk about forests and fields, they call them "carbon sinks." Our negotiators wanted credit for a whole bunch of carbon dioxide—300 million tons—that would be absorbed by our trees and plants. When you really think about it, they said, we were absorbing so much carbon dioxide that it was OK for us to make so much. Wasn't that clever?

But these people called the Europeans didn't think so. They all drove tiny cars and were used to paying a lot for oil. They thought we should all drive tiny cars and use money from taxes to pro-

mote the use of hydrogen power, solar energy, wind power and a bunch of other things that could give us all the energy we need and not cause global warming.

Those Europeans were real pests. They treated us the way I treat your sister when she eats too many cookies. They said no more treats until you eat some good food. They just didn't understand that when you've been eating cookies long enough, only cookies taste good.

But we still tried to be nice. Our negotiators agreed to just accept credit for just 75 million tons of carbon dioxide absorbed by our sinks. And we said we would help build all kinds of neat things to help reduce the threat of global warming, like nuclear power plants. We also promised that we would not prevent timber companies from cutting down the boring old trees that just stand there, so they could plant new baby trees that suck that bad carbon dioxide out of the sky. That way we wouldn't have to change the way we did things.

A protocol is what grown-ups argue about before they argue about whether to actually do anything.

But the Europeans took their toys and went home. This made some people really nervous, since it meant there was no agreement by the countries of the world to do anything to head off global warming. Right before the UNWCCC, a magazine called *Nature* (it's written by super-smart people) predicted that by the end of the 21st century the earth could be 8 degrees warmer than it is now.

I know that sounds really bad. But don't worry. Our most likely new president (that's another story) isn't even sure global warming exists. He thinks maybe it's something 102 Nobel Prize winners (those are super-super-smart people) made up to scare us. Anyway, he promised to look at the problem and talk to his advisers, who know all about the oil industry. I'm sure they'll think of something. The end. ☐

KEEP FLORIDA ALIVE

The election fiasco should lead to wholesale reform

By David Moberg

The next president—whoever he may be—will serve under a cloud of suspicion, his legitimacy always in question. That is partly a result of the close election and the thoroughly compromised Florida vote count, but it is also a legacy of a flawed political system whose undemocratic inadequacies have become increasingly apparent.

At some point, the electoral machinery will grind out a result, and someone will be the lawful winner of the contest, according to the rules of the game and its referees. There likely will be some phony semblance of uniting for the good of the country, led by pundits who have been rushing in an unseemly fashion to find “closure” and declare a winner, even though most Americans patiently have tolerated the process and want to believe that their votes count. (Though Gore might have used Bush’s arguments were he 500 votes ahead.) Indeed, most people seem, quite reasonably, to have found the aftermath more engaging than the election itself and Chad to be as interesting as George or Al. Despite the old admonitions against watching laws or sausage being made, the post-election battle has provided a spirited spectacle of raw power and clashing ideas, even if they are often only translucent cloaks for power grabs.

More importantly, the election crisis opens up new possibilities for challenging the legitimacy of some aspects of our inherited political institutions and processes, and forcing a debate on what democracy could and should mean in the 21st century. It is simply the latest, most dramatic development in a series of unfolding crises of American democracy that unfortunately so far have produced more cynicism and withdrawal than protest or demands for deep-seated reform. Debates about process and institutional forms normally leave most people cold, but the outrages of the 2000 presidential election might spur even highly pragmatic citizens to see the link between how we go about selecting government leaders and the results we get from government.



Jesse Jackson speaks to thousands of protesters at a rally in Tallahassee.

ROBERT KING/NEWSMAKERS

At press time, Bush still seemed on course to his narrow victory, despite persuasive indications that Gore actually had the support of a slim majority of voters in Florida and thus should be president. But in terms of personal legitimacy, Bush is more vulnerable than Gore would be, even with a come-from-behind upset through court decisions. By all counts so far, Bush lost the popular vote, and while the system may be defined in terms of electoral votes, the legitimacy of rulers in the popular mind rests on majority support of the voters.

There undoubtedly will be challenges to the Electoral College, which has been tainted by anti-popular elitism and the special interests of the slaveholding states from its origins, and which no longer plausibly provides enough benefits to offset its great disadvantages. Small states, which wield disproportionate power because of the Electoral College, have an interest in preserving it, but even their citizens may conclude that it is no longer a legitimate institution.

The institutional crisis, however, goes far beyond the Electoral College to a broader sense that existing politics does not serve most people or democratic ideals. Despite the great odds against third parties, there has been a higher level of support for the idea of alternative parties than indicated in the campaigns of Perot, Nader and others. There is widespread sentiment that the debate is too narrow and, with both



candidates this time trying to steal the other's thunder, too muddled and confusing. Popular frustration with the choices—a sense especially among many lower-income working people that nobody is speaking to their needs and interests—is likely one of the contributors to another of the more serious signs of systemic illegitimacy: the steady decline in the percentage of eligible people who vote (barely over half this year). Their dropping out is less a sign of happy acquiescence with the way things are than a statement that they see little connection between politics and their lives.

Despite earlier failures in enacting campaign finance reform, this \$4 billion election, with cash flooding through the loopholes, has increased revulsion at the influence of money in politics. John McCain's appeal in the Republican primaries was one sign of the popularity of such reforms. Perhaps more than anything else, the money primary, which is the initial hurdle for candidates and a severe constraint on the range of ideas in politics, has undermined the sense of legitimacy of American democracy. When candidates are commodities, campaigns are marketing exercises and elections are for sale, there is no reason for people to trust and respect political institutions or leaders.

Ironically, the Republicans, the supposed guardians of original constitutional intent and conservative heritage, have escalated the attack on the legitimacy of political institutions during the Clinton years. From the beginning of Bill Clinton's term, Republicans denied his legitimacy, though his claim on the office was far stronger than Bush will have if he is sworn in. Their politics of scandal, using the now nearly forgotten Whitewater case as the opening for an unending attempt to overturn Clinton's presidency, culminated in the impeachment case that was finally stopped mainly because the majority of Americans clearly opposed it. The Democrats are no saints on any of these counts—fundraising abuses, scandal politics, suppression of debate—but the Republican assault on Clinton exacerbated the growing public disillusionment with politics. In general, such disillusionment serves Republican anti-governmental ends. But if Bush enters the White House, he may find that Florida is his Whitewater, an unending series of scandals that undermine his own claim to power beyond anything that Clinton faced.

Whatever happens in the courts and the counts, progressives should continue, paraphrasing Jesse Jackson, to keep Florida alive. There are too many important questions about what happened in the Florida election to throw in the towel, even if Gore is forced to concede. The objective should not be simply further crippling Bush, but rather opening a broad discussion about remaking democracy to guarantee popular power, to reduce the power of monied interests, and to protect the rights of individuals and minorities.

Democracy is—or should be—more than voting, but if votes aren't even accurately counted, democracy is a fraud and there's less reason for anyone to head to the polls. This year's balloting could have been a civics lesson in how every vote can count; instead it has showed how many votes don't. The Florida fiasco (which could have been repeated in many other states) demonstrated that America doesn't take democracy seriously enough to make even the modest investments need-

ed for technical reliability. There are far superior technologies to punching ballots, such as optical scanners at the polls that give voters immediate feedback about potential errors. And if they generate paper records that can be verified, computers should open possibilities for even more accurate methods.

Like nearly everything else in the election, the failure to invest in reliable voting technologies was skewed. The *Washington Post*, *New York Times* and *Miami Herald* all reported that black voters, overwhelmingly Gore supporters, were much more likely to use voting equipment that had far higher rates of rejection and error than were white voters. For example, the *Herald* reported that 88 percent of precincts where more than a fifth of ballots were rejected used punch cards. Punch cards were concentrated in urban Democratic districts. While 3.9 percent of all ballots were rejected in the punch card counties, only 1.4 percent of ballots were tossed out in the optical scanner counties.



Eventually the Florida Supreme Court (above) will rule and someone will be declared the winner of the Electoral College. But the crisis of democracy won't be over.

If the 185,000 Florida ballots that were unsuccessfully punched, marked for more than one candidate for an office, or otherwise rejected on technical grounds had been counted—assuming those ballots had been cast much like other votes in the same precinct—Gore would have won the state by more than 23,000 votes, according to an analysis prepared by Arizona State University journalism professor Stephen Doig for the *Herald*. Even assuming, unrealistically, that as many as 90 percent of those voters really intended not to vote for anyone for president, Gore would still have won by 1,443 votes.

Eventually, as *Salon* reporter Jake Tapper noted, there will be recounts of these votes by journalists, academics and others who can get access to the ballots, thanks to Florida's admirable sunshine laws. If Bush becomes president, his stature won't rise when it's reported that he didn't really win the majority in Florida (and thus of the Electoral College). He ultimately will owe any potential victory to the Republican scorched-earth crusade to stop the partial hand recount of votes in counties with clear problems as well as the

full statewide hand recount that was the best and most accurate option available to determine the victor.

Meanwhile, the Justice Department is investigating the accumulating evidence of widespread obstacles to blacks trying to cast their ballots (see below). For example, last summer Secretary of State Katherine Harris distributed a list of 700,000 voters who were to be disqualified from voting because they had committed a felony. But many African-Americans who had never committed felonies or who had previously arranged to restore their voting rights reported that they were stripped from the rolls. According to London's *Observer*, a disproportionate number of blacks were purged, even after accounting for different conviction rates. (The source of the grossly flawed list was reportedly a division of ChoicePoint, a firm whose owner is a major Republican financial contributor.)

While better technical methods of counting votes, more politically neutral election officials and national minimum standards for federal elections would be a small step in the right direction, the election crisis should lead to more wholesale reform: eliminating the Electoral College, public financing of elections, instant-runoff ballots, proportional representation, free access to television and radio—including public debates—for candidates eligible for public financing, and Election Day voter registration at the polls. Such reforms would go a long way toward strengthening democracy and increasing the political power of average citizens. They might even open the door to more candidates who are worth a vote. If George Bush's victory can help bring that about, it will undoubtedly be his greatest, if entirely inadvertent, accomplishment. ■

NEVER AGAIN

The real election scandal was the disenfranchisement of black voters

By Juan Gonzalez

The long and bitter post-election battle in Florida began as a simple partisan fight over whether Al Gore or George W. Bush would be the next president, but it rapidly escalated into something far more serious. Quite simply, the Florida vote-counting fiasco has sparked a major public debate over the very nature of our electoral system and revealed profound problems in the way our nation chooses its leaders.

Perhaps the most troubling of those problems is the vast disconnect that has emerged between the right to vote that so many Americans cherish and the slipshod, amateurish and unequal way those votes are handled and counted. The nation has been aware for weeks that 185,000 ballots—nearly 3 percent of those cast in Florida—were disqualified by machine counts that registered either two candidates chosen for president (overvoting) or none at all (undervoting). That percentage—higher than the 2 percent average in most national elections—is reason enough for concern. But not until several weeks after the election did hard facts emerge on the astonishing number of black Floridians whose ballots were disqualified.

In a November 17 *New York Daily News* column, I reported on the nearly 27,000 votes disqualified in Duval County, noting that a huge percentage of them came from the mostly black precincts of Jacksonville. In some black precincts, more than 30 percent of ballots for president were discarded for overvoting or undervoting. While only one in 14 ballots in heavily white precincts of Duval were thrown out, the average was more than one in five in the black precincts.

And Jacksonville was not alone. A December 1 report in the *Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel* revealed that a third of

22,800 disqualified votes in three South Florida counties came from mostly black precincts. In those areas, the discarded votes averaged at least 8 percent. That was followed by a December 3 report in the *Washington Post* that precincts in Miami-Dade County where blacks constitute more than 70 percent of voters, nearly 10 percent of ballots were invalidated; but in counties that were 70 percent or more nonblack, the average was only 3.4 percent. Backwater rural communities produced the same amazing figures. In northeast Gadsden County, a former plantation area where blacks constitute a majority of the population, more than 2,000 of the county's 16,800 votes were thrown out.

To Bush loyalists, and cynics in general, these statistics prove only that many uneducated black voters haven't a clue as to what they're doing in the voting booth—and if they can't read instructions and lose their vote, that's their problem.

It is clear, however, that badly designed ballots in some counties made things worse. Palm Beach's butterfly ballot is already the stuff of legend. In Duval County, the official sample ballot produced by the county's Republican canvassing board instructed voters to "vote on every page" and listed all presidential candidates on a single page. But the actual ballot, only half the size of the sample, listed the candidates on two pages and

directed, in small print: "Vote appropriate pages."

"We realized afterward it created a lot of confusion, and we won't be doing it that way again," says Susan Tucker Johnson, spokeswoman for Duval's canvassing board. Amazingly, a front-page *New York Times* story on that county's problems never mentioned the sample ballot snafu. The *Times* report, which was rife with several other errors, ascribed the confusion by black voters to poor instructions from Democratic Party activists.

**"The same neighborhoods
that have poor schools,
poor roads and poor
health care end up having
poor voting machines."**



In reality, no one in Florida was prepared for the enormous turnout of black voters on Election Day. While 540,000 blacks voted in the 1996 presidential election, this year 893,000 showed up at the polls, a 65 percent increase. That number would have been even greater were it not for the hundreds and perhaps thousands of blacks denied the right to vote because their names did not appear on voter rolls or because they had been mistakenly purged as convicted felons. And of course, it does not include the 400,000 black men who, because of a single felony conviction, are banned for life from voting in the Sunshine State.

But those blacks who managed to cast a vote confronted other problems. The *Washington Post* reported that 26 percent of black voters reside in counties where their vote was verified and counted by an optical scanner as soon as it was cast, returning it for possible correction, while 34 percent of whites were in counties with those machines.

Gadsden County, for instance, has optical scanning machines, but its votes are counted in one central place after the polls close. "This counter we got cost about \$50,000," says Denny Hutchinson, supervisor of elections in Gadsden. "It probably would cost 10 times that much for a counter in every precinct. We haven't been able to afford it."

But most of Florida's richest counties have optical scanners in every voting precinct. In those counties it is impossible to vote for two candidates for the same post because the scanner rejects the ballot. A lot of "smart" Republicans, in other words, had a little help from their voting machines.

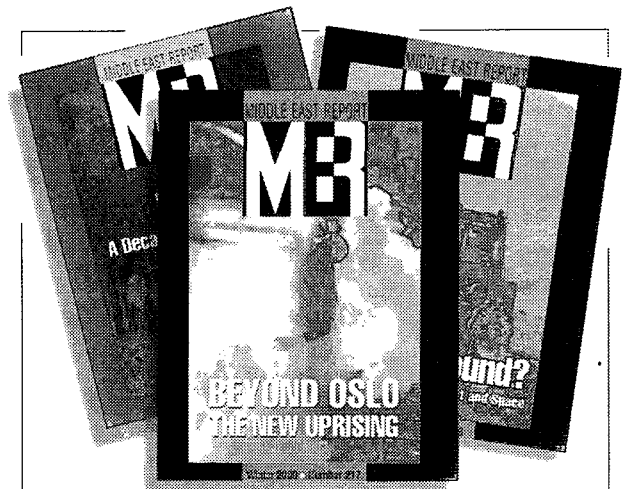
"The same neighborhoods that have poor schools, poor roads and poor health care end up having poor voting machines," says Rep. Alcee Hastings, the South Florida Democrat. While Hastings, who is black, does not believe there was intentional racism at work on Election Day, he is quick to add, "Race was a factor, damn right it was."

The formal literacy tests of the Jim Crow days may be gone, but some of the ballots have gotten so complicated, Hastings says, that "you've got to have at least a high school education to decipher them." What happens to the millions of Americans, many of them black and Hispanic, who are functionally illiterate, or have only a sixth-grade education? "They still work every day, they still pay taxes, they still raise children," he says, "but the election system is not being fair to them."

We live in a nation where state lotteries and race track betting booths flawlessly keep track of every pick by their millions of customers on a daily basis. So the revelation that politicians of both parties have allowed a third-class and unequal voting system to flourish—one that can easily be manipulated to subvert the will of the voters—is a scandal so huge that American elections will never be the same again.

It is a scandal sure to lead to major reforms of voting procedures in every state during the next few years, and that could be the most lasting peoples' victory of the 2000 election. As for Jeb Bush and those Republicans in the Florida legislature who fought so hard to prevent every ballot from being counted, something tells me their days are numbered. The state's 893,000 black registered voters and all those elderly Jewish voters in Palm Beach are not about to forget the lesson they learned this Election Day.

None of us will. ■



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THE NEXT WAVE: FEMINISM FOR ALL

That well-worn feminist slogan "the personal is political" has taken on a new, exclusive meaning in the past several years. The personal, it seems, is all that's political anymore. Feminism—on college campuses, in the media and even in Washington—has become overwhelmingly personal at the expense of political action. While the economic chasm between rich and poor widens, why have many feminist sources repeatedly trumpeted Monica and masturbation, confessionals, Kegel exercises and Courtney Love?

The one big feminist political issue of the '90s was abortion. Feminists have obsessed over *Roe v. Wade* and championed Clinton and Gore for defending the right to choose. But at the same time, most women in this country have watched their ability to obtain an abortion disappear. As Miranda Kennedy points out in "Access Denied," 85 percent of counties nationwide have no abortion provider. It's still true that women with money can always access abortion, but women with less cannot.

From health care to the workplace, one important question has been lost: What about women who still lack the basic rights middle- and upper-class women now take for granted? In this issue, *In These Times* looks at a few of the problems facing those left behind in the feminist

revolution. As Barbara Ehrenreich wrote last year in these pages, "While middle-class women gained MBAs, working-class women won the right to not be called 'honey'—and not a whole lot more than that."

It's time to move on to a "fourth wave" of feminism. Its goal should be to close the class gap and extend feminism's gains to all women. Old-time "women's lib" feminists and my generation's riot grrrls need to get busy and get radical. Instead of sticking up for politicians, we need to get in their faces and demand greater economic equality and, in turn, greater freedom for all women.

Kristin Kolb-Angelbeck

ACCESS DENIED

ABORTION MAY BE LEGAL, BUT CAN YOU GET ONE?

By MIRANDA KENNEDY

When Mary Burns (not her real name) discovered she was pregnant, she was afraid to tell her mother. She knew that if her stepfather found out, he would "beat me with an inch of my life." She was only 16, and there was no room to raise a child in her parents' trailer.

Burns wanted an abortion, but was shocked by the few choices she had. In South Carolina, where she lives, minors are required to get the written consent of one parent before they can have the procedure. South Carolina does offer a judicial bypass, but this option was moot because no judge in the state would hear her case. The clock was ticking. Abortions can be legally performed in South Carolina up to the sixth month of pregnancy, but no clinic in the state will perform an abortion after the first three months. By the time Burns traveled to Atlanta, secured an out-of-state judicial bypass and set up an appointment, she was almost 20 weeks pregnant, raising both the cost and the risks.

Paying for an abortion is not usually a problem for middle- and upper-class women. For teen-agers like Burns, however, a lack of financial resources, parental consent laws, and the scarcity of clinics and cooperative judges make abortion nearly inaccessible. And that's not all: According to legislation that passed the House of Representatives last year, Burns' boyfriend and his grandmother could be prosecuted for transporting her across the state line to get an abortion. The so-called Child

Custody Protection Act would make it a crime for anyone other than a parent to assist a young woman in getting an out-of-state abortion if she has not fulfilled her home state's parental notification requirement.

Even though *Roe v. Wade* is still intact, women across the country are realizing that their access to abortion has diminished. Legislation is stacking up to block young, poor and rural women from obtaining abortions. Anti-choice groups long ago identified providers as the "weak link" to abortion rights, and launched a stealth attack on doctors and clinic staff through the courts and Congress. Mark Crutcher's influential 1992 underground manual, *Firestorm: A Guerrilla Strategy for a Pro-life America*, lays out strategies to sabotage and harass doctors and women through what he calls "guerrilla legislation": passing "pro-life laws" and promoting malpractice litigation against abortion doctors. Crutcher envisions "an America where abortion may indeed be perfectly legal, but no one can get one."

To this end, Crutcher founded the Denton, Texas-based Life Dynamics, which sends out direct mail to 450,000 providers and 30,000 medical students nationwide. The mailers include fake business cards and posters titled "Serving Your Baby Killer's Needs," emblazoned with a provider's photo, name and address. They also publish graphic books of crude,

racist jokes that make abortion providers "the laughing stock of the medical community." Crutcher also helped form a law firm to litigate abortion malpractice cases; the firm has recruited 600 lawyers and 500 expert witnesses to help make malpractice suits commonplace.

Due to the work of such anti-choice groups, guerrilla legislation is thriving. In the past six years, 157 federal anti-choice bills were proposed in Congress and all but 24 passed (most were later vetoed). In that period, more than 400 anti-choice measures were introduced in state legislatures, an increase of 300 percent since 1995. So-called "partial-birth abortion" bans passed in more than 30 states before the Supreme Court declared them unconstitutional last spring.

At the state level, access to abortion has been restricted in countless ways. Thirty states have laws requiring clinic personnel to read to their patients graphic, government-produced scripts that promote childbearing before they can schedule an abortion. In 32 states, young women must obtain the consent of one or both parents before they can have an abortion. Many states also impose mandatory waiting periods, requiring a woman to wait from eight to 72 hours between her first appointment and the abortion procedure. The American Medical Association has concluded that waiting periods "increase the gestational age at which the induced pregnancy termination occurs, thereby also increasing the risk associated with the procedure." According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a reproductive-rights research organization, during the first five months of Mississippi's waiting period law, the number of abortions dropped 22 percent.

Conservative politicians have made abortions even less accessible for poor women. Since 1976, the Hyde Amendment (named for Illinois Rep. Henry Hyde) has banned the use of federal funds for covering abortions for women on Medicaid. Only 15 states and the District of Columbia provide funding for poor women to obtain abortions. The cost of a first or second trimester outpatient abortion ranges from \$200 to \$400, but later abortions are much more complicated and usually cost thousands of dollars.

Rhona Johnson (not her real name) of Lewisville, Texas was 26 weeks pregnant when the fetus she was carrying was diagnosed with spina bifida and hydrocephalus, spinal and neural conditions that usually lead to permanent brain damage. Doctors told her the fetus would either die in utero

or live less than a year. Giving birth would have required major surgery, risking Johnson's own life.

Johnson learned that only two doctors in the country were qualified to perform the type of late-term abortion she needed. Her insurance did not cover the procedure, so she and her husband scraped and borrowed to come up with the \$4,000 needed for the abortion and for travel expenses to Dr. George Tiller's clinic in Wichita, Kansas. Tiller's clinic is a prime target of the anti-choice movement: In 1993, he was shot and wounded by an anti-abortion extremist. "They told us there would be protesters," Johnson says, "but there were crowds videotaping me and calling me a murderer."

Johnson's experience outside the clinic was so horrific, and her experience inside so positive, that she became staunchly pro-choice. "People don't want to talk about sex or its consequences," she adds, "but the saddest part is that pro-lifers do not trust women to make their own decisions."

Meanwhile, violence and legal intimidation have fueled a dramatic drop in the number of doctors and clinics. Over

the past seven years, seven abortion doctors and clinic workers have been murdered and 12 others injured in attacks by anti-abortion terrorists in North America. Threats of bioterrorism, primarily anthrax hoaxes, and other forms of harassment continue to disrupt clinics. Eighty-four percent of counties nationwide have no abortion provider.

Another *Firestorm*-inspired tactic is putting abortion providers out of business by not renewing leases, placing onerous regulations on abortion facilities, or seeking to bankrupt providers through malpractice charges. In the

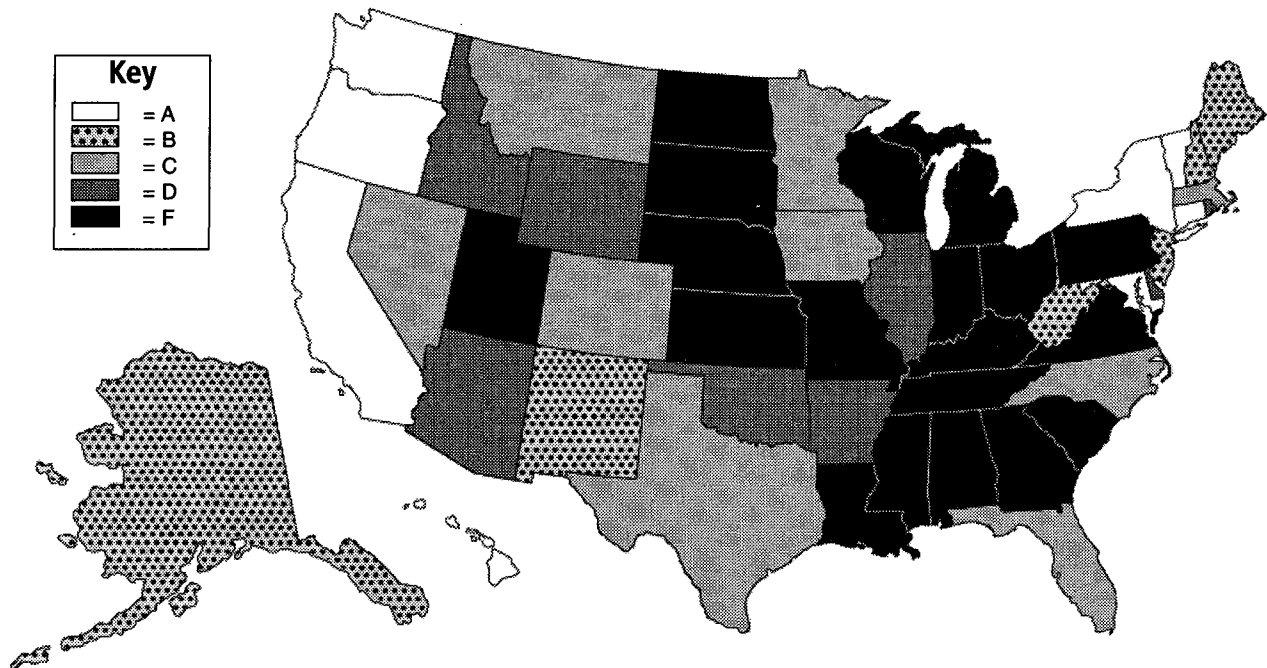
case of Florida abortion provider Dr. James Pendergraft, such tactics have translated into serious federal charges against him. Pendergraft, a highly credentialed African-American doctor, publicly advertises that he performs late-term abortions. He practices in five clinics in a state where two doctors have been murdered and wears a bulletproof vest on his rounds. Three years ago Pendergraft tried to open a facility in the conservative central Florida city of Ocala (where the last abortion clinic was destroyed by arson in 1989), and was informed in a letter from the chairman of the Marion County Board of Commissioners that he was not welcome there. Pendergraft ignored the letter and opened the clinic. But his patients and staff received constant threats of violence and were besieged with protesters. He was denied permission by the city to hire off-duty police officers as security guards. In 1998, Pendergraft



MARK CRUTCHER ENVISIONS "AN AMERICA WHERE ABORTION MAY INDEED BE PERFECTLY LEGAL, BUT NO ONE CAN GET ONE."

Each year NARAL publishes *Who Decides? A State-by-State Review of Abortion and Reproductive Rights*, which chronicles laws regulating abortion across the country, including a ranking of all the states based on the degree to which they restrict women's access to abortion.

The rankings are based on NARAL's evaluation of state laws in 14 categories, including: husband/parent consent requirements, waiting periods, insurance coverage, clinic protection, abortion procedures and time limits. States received points in each category, zero points meaning the laws were pro-choice. Points were totaled to calculate an overall grade between "A" and "F." This year, only 9 states earned an A; more than one-third of states received an F; and the overall grade for the country was a D+.



won an injunction against the city in federal court, on the grounds that Ocala and Marion County failed to protect the clinic from harassment.

But Pendergraft's problems continued. In June, during the injunction negotiations, Pendergraft was indicted for attempted extortion of the county. The charge stems from an alleged conversation between Pendergraft and his attorney about settling the case. Pendergraft and his supporters claim he is innocent and that the charges are just another attempt to keep him from offering abortion services. His trial begins on December 11; he faces a possible 30 years in prison, loss of his medical license and a fine of more than \$1 million. Even if Pendergraft wins, the time and money he has spent defending himself have sapped much-needed resources from his medical practice, which some say is the real goal of the case.

Pro-choice advocates emphasize that they have been forced on the defensive in response to legislation proposed by the right, and that the threat is not going away. "Most people don't believe that it is possible to overturn Roe, but it certainly is," says Vicki Saporta, executive director of the National Abortion Federation. "And we need to be very concerned that the Justice Department under a Republican administration will not discourage violence against abortion providers."

Several campaigns have been launched recently to improve the reproductive options of all women. The Campaign for Access and Reproductive Equity, for instance, is alerting the public to legislation that undermines the reproductive health of young women, low-income women and women of color.

Another group, Medical Students for Choice, aims to reverse the stigma against abortion providers and increase their numbers. The group now has more than 4,000 members on 100 college campuses. If only half of them include abortion services when they enter private practice, the number of abortion providers nationwide would double.

Pro-choice activist Rosemary Candelario believes the movement could learn a little about aggressive organizing from the right. "We need to return to the radical roots of activism," she says, "and force politicians to work on our issues." ■

Miranda Kennedy is research editor at *Ms. magazine* and a reporter at WBAI, New York's Pacifica radio station.

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UNDER MY SKIN

LESSONS FROM THE DEMISE OF NORPLANT

By BARBARA SEAMAN

On December 16, 1990, *New York Times Magazine* writer Philip J. Hilts described Norplant as “likely to be, with the exception of sterilization, the most effective contraceptive ever introduced.”

But 10 years after its approval by the Food and Drug Administration, Norplant is almost history. Last summer, an article in Planned Parenthood’s *Family Planning Perspectives*, titled “Why Are U.S. Women Not Using Long-Acting Contraceptives?” reported that in 1993 only 1.2 percent of women of childbearing age were using Norplant, a figure that shrank to 0.9 percent by 1995. More than half of the women surveyed said that “using the implant would be bad for them.”

In the United Kingdom, where Norplant was not introduced until 1993, it was withdrawn from sale in 1999. As *The Lancet* observed, “Norplant’s image in the newspapers was suddenly transformed from that of a wonderful new contraceptive into a ‘controversial implant’ that became a nightmare for women who used it. Norplant’s media downfall was apparently triggered when women and solicitors started to tell the media about individual experiences of problems with Norplant — some of which involved well-known side effects.”

It’s true. The side effects were known long before Norplant was officially brought to market, but they were not disclosed to users.

Norplant is a system of six matchstick-size Silastic (a blend of silicone and plastic) capsules, which are implanted in the fleshy underside of a woman’s arm, above the elbow. They contain levonorgestrel, a synthetic progestin, which slowly leaks out of the capsules and enters the bloodstream, providing a high degree of protection against pregnancy for up to five years. Research for the development of Norplant was started in the ’60s by Drs. Sheldon Segal and Horacio Croxatto of the Population Council, a nonprofit organization in New York dedicated to global population control.

Norplant works to prevent pregnancy in several ways.

About half the time, the progestin suppresses ovulation. If ovulation does occur, the thickened cervical mucus prevents sperm from migrating through the cervical canal to the uterus. Moreover, levonorgestrel suppresses the endometrium, so that a pregnancy cannot easily be supported. All told, Norplant is more than 98 percent effective. It’s safer than the pill in that it seems not to increase the risk of such life-threatening conditions as blood clots and strokes, and lacking estrogens, it is less likely to promote breast and endometrial cancers.

However, Norplant substantially raises the risk (up to 18 percent) of ectopic pregnancy in those who do conceive while using it. Although levonorgestrel provides protection against

pregnancy for five years, it also has been associated with uncontrollable menstrual chaos. Some women on Norplant may bleed for two or three weeks, then spot for days, then bleed again for another two to three weeks. Other women may go several months without a period, then bleed or spot irregularly. For some women—a minority—menstrual chaos resolves after the early months of use, but for up to two-thirds it continues. To control it, some doctors prescribe estrogen, which increases both the cost of contraception and the level of risk.

Besides menstrual chaos, other common side effects of Norplant include: gain or loss of more than five pounds; headaches, nervousness and depression; facial hair growth and loss of scalp hair. Less frequent side effects are: dizziness, nausea, breast soreness and nipple discharge, rashes and infection, and chronic pain at the insertion site.

At least one Norplant user in six has experienced difficulties at the time of removal. Product information brochures assure the user that “capsules are removed under local anesthesia through the same incision in which they were placed. The removal procedure usually takes 15 to 20 minutes.” But thousands of women in the United States have sought damages for the “severe pain and scarring” they suffered when practitioners attempted the removal. Large, impenetrable



GEORGE MILLER/KRT

masses of scar tissue—"fibrous envelopes"—had formed around the capsules. Sometimes the capsules had been incorrectly implanted and proved difficult to find, or they broke, or they became dislodged from their original location and moved to areas deeper in the body. Other times the practitioners lacked training and expertise to properly perform the removal.

Despite many years of clinical trials, little information has been published about Norplant's long-term effects, much less about the impact on any children who may have been conceived or breast-fed while their mothers were using it. (The hormone makes its way into breast milk and thus can be ingested by the baby.) Norplant is widely offered to nursing mothers, even though the World Health Organization recommends against it.

Because women cannot remove it on their own, Norplant presents abundant opportunities for coercion and social control. Research by independent evaluators suggests that Norplant is often pushed on women in a manner that is neither safe nor respectful of their rights. In the United States, some judges, prison officials and state legislators have tried to mandate Norplant for women convicted of child abuse, as well as for poor women receiving welfare.

In developing countries such as Indonesia, family planners have refused to remove Norplant when heavy bleeding occurs. In some regions, poor women were charged exorbitant sums for removal, as much as the equivalent of three-months' wages. In a quarter century of clinical trials, the scientists associated with the Population Council and other respected organizations failed to follow their own ethical obligation to offer women an informed choice.

Women's health groups collected data on Norplant, tracked down users and documented their experiences. They found that the population controllers distributing Norplant often neglected to report problems, family planners were instructed not to remove the rods when irregular bleeding occurred, and difficulties with removal were occurring more often in dark-skinned than light-skinned women—perhaps because of a greater tendency to form scar tissue.

Feminists brought these matters to the attention of the FDA before approval of Norplant in 1990. At that time, they called for the drawbacks to be thoroughly explained to potential users, and for medical professionals to provide women with consent forms. The FDA cautioned doctors that "any Norplant patient with pain in the lower abdomen must be evaluated to rule out ectopic pregnancy."

To block these regulations, Norplant's developers and distributors mounted a public-relations campaign aimed at discrediting the activists, who were portrayed as "anti-technology." The targets of this campaign included the Boston Women's Health Book Collective and myself. Dr. Lisa Rarick, the FDA project officer who shepherded Norplant approval, later told me that she had urged the manufacturer to voluntarily provide patients with written warnings of the difficult removals, but she lacked authority to enforce this when the manufacturer declined.

FEMINISTS WERE CLOSER TO THE MARK THAN THE MODERN MALTHUSIANS WHO PREACH "ZERO POPULATION GROWTH" AT ANY COST.

The feminists who first raised and publicized concerns about Norplant would have preferred to see this product succeed, since part of our agenda is to offer women as many diverse contraceptive options as possible. If Norplant had been introduced more realistically and more cautiously, with full disclosure of its risks and better protection of users' rights, comfort and dignity, it might have found a suitable niche—and fewer women would have felt that Norplant was misrepresented to them.

With the recent approval of the "abortion pill" RU-486, the FDA followed the safety standards that feminists advocated for Norplant (see "New Pill, Old Problems," November 13). This time the Population Council went along, but they still seem unable to acknowledge that the users—those women whose own bodies are on the line—observe and register product drawbacks and side effects far more keenly than scientific investigators who

likely have a stake in the product's success.

In the ongoing 30-year debate between health feminists and population controllers, our passionate position was always against experimentation on the innocent. Evidence showed that when women learn to read and write and to earn their own money outside of the home, when they no longer need to give birth to a large brood in the hope that one or two might remain to support us in our old age—then, by whatever method, most women drastically reduce their family size.

By the late '90s, many demographers acknowledged (often to their own surprise) that we'd been closer to the mark than our opponents, the modern Malthusians who preach "zero population growth" at any cost. Statistics gathered at Harvard, among other centers, confirm stunning declines in population growth as women in nation after nation—the more developed and the less—are empowered to lead independent lives. It's women's liberation that's bringing down the birth rate, more than dangerous devices and drugs. ■

Barbara Seaman is author of the The Doctors Case Against the Pill and co-founder of the National Women's Health Network. Her most recent book, with Gary Null, is For Women Only! Your Guide to Health Empowerment.



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BAD MEDICINE

FOR WOMEN IN PRISON, HEALTH CARE IS EITHER DEFUNCT OR DANGEROUS

By KARI LYDERSEN

Gloria Johnson knew she had multiple sclerosis when she entered the maximum-security Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla to serve a 35-month sentence for embezzlement in 1995. She had been diagnosed with the degenerative disease in 1979, and she knew what medications and care she needed to keep her condition in check.

But in prison, not only was Johnson denied the medicine she needed, but guards and administrators were dismissive of

her requests and questioned whether she even had MS. Lacking the necessary treatments and suffering the same poor nutrition and hygiene conditions that affect almost all women in prison, her condition drastically worsened. Johnson became a quadriplegic, unable to move her arms or legs, and she needed constant care. For the last 18 months of her sentence, she sat in her cell wearing a diaper 24 hours a day; she

was brought to the toilet only once a day. She bathed "when they felt like it" and brushed her teeth "when they had time."

"They won't give you the medicine or the tests you need," says Johnson, 46, who now lives in San Diego and collects disability payments. "They have the attitude that you're a prisoner so you don't deserve anything. They had me on so many meds I was nodding off all the time, but they wouldn't give me betaseron."

After her release, Johnson resumed her treatment. "Within nine months I was getting better," she says. "I could move my arms again. It was the prison that caused me to become a quadriplegic."

Cynthia Martin had a similar experience at Central California Women's Facility. She was convicted of arson after being caught in a fire in a house her boyfriend was rehabbing. Martin entered prison with second- and third-degree burns covering 54 percent of her body. Prison medics and guards denied Martin lotion for her burns. Her body was covered with pressure garments she needed to wear 23 hours a day, and she wasn't given new ones during the three years she was in prison.

"Imagine the worst sunburn you could think of, multiply that by 10, and think of not being able to put lotion on," says Martin, 52. "When I finally would get some lotion, it would run out in a few days, and I'd have to fight for months to get more. I even had my family sending me lotion and oils, and they would return the packages without letting me get them."

As bad as her care was, Martin says she witnessed even worse. "I saw guards kicking people having seizures, or stand-

ing by and letting them writhe on the ground, breaking their teeth," she says. "When other inmates tried to help, they would push them away. I saw a girl go to the doctor with heart problems, and he told her to take Motrin and go to bed. By morning she had died of a heart attack."

The abysmal care received by Johnson and Martin is typical. While many doctors and health advocates say the health care prisoners receive is substandard, incarcerated women face far worse situations than men. "Historically women in the United States have been treated as second-class citizens to men, and prison is no different," says Barbara Echols, executive director of



JANET BLACKMON MORGAN

the Chicago-based Prison Action Committee, which recently released a three-year study detailing the failings of health care in Illinois prisons. "Research has indicated that imprisoned males receive woefully inadequate and substandard medical care. The health care received by female prisoners is even worse, despite the fact that women have more numerous and more unique health care needs."

Women face a range of reproductive and psychological health issues not faced by men, issues male guards and prison doctors are not likely to understand. In many states, women giving birth in prison are shackled to their beds during labor, and most imprisoned pregnant women go through their pregnancies with little or no contact with a gynecologist. "Women with high-risk pregnancies aren't seen regularly," says Cassie Pierson, an attorney with Legal Services for Prisoners with Children.

Reports compiled by various advocacy groups tell stories of women who find lumps in their breasts but aren't allowed to see a specialist for months. In most prisons, professional pap smears and mammograms are not regularly offered, increasing the chance that undiagnosed breast, cervical or uterine cancers will progress to untreatable levels. Martin, for example, says she was never able to get a pap smear or mammogram while in prison, even though she is supposed to have yearly mammograms for fibrocystic breasts.

Menstruating women are usually given tiny allotments of sanitary products, with the commissary charging grossly inflated prices for them to buy more. Women in California, for example, get two tampons and one pad a day during their periods.

When women do receive care, it is typically neither professional nor effective. Reports of misdiagnosis and medication errors, sometimes with disastrous results, are common. The Prison Action Committee report cites an instance in which a woman was given medicine for a vaginal infection, which caused burning sensations and bleeding. She later discovered that the medication was actually clotrimazole, a treatment for athlete's foot.

The incidence and spread of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, tuberculosis and other serious communicable diseases is reaching epidemic proportions in many prisons, yet little meaningful effort is put into prevention and education. According to Cynthia Chandler, a lawyer and the founder of Women's Positive Legal Action Network in Oakland, 60 percent of imprisoned women in California test positive for hepatitis C. A 1993 Justice Department study showed that 4.2 percent of female prisoners were HIV positive, compared to 2.5 percent of males. Actual infection rates are probably much higher and have likely increased since 1993. A more recent study of New York state prisons showed that 19 percent of women there were HIV positive.

"Women are using drugs, having sex and tattooing in prison," Chandler says, "but the prisons don't want to admit it so there are no condoms or clean needles available, no information about AIDS prevention or STDs. Our puritanical, tough-on-crime morals are breeding a health crisis in

prisons. They're setting up a situation where we'll have thousands of women dying of HIV and hepatitis in prison in the near future."

Female prisoners already have high rates of HIV infection, STDs and psychological trauma due to past drug use, sex work, domestic violence or sexual abuse, and these problems are exponentially compounded once they enter the prison system. A 1998 Justice Department study reported that 48 percent of women in U.S. prisons and jails reported being sexually abused prior to their detention, and 27 percent

reported being raped. (General under-reporting of sex crimes means these numbers are likely even higher.)

And rape isn't always a thing of the past for these inmates. Within prison

walls, women are also subject to rampant rape, coerced sex and sexual abuse, causing psychological trauma and putting them at risk of unwanted pregnancies, and HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. "There is sexual abuse and rape going on in prisons by guards and health care providers," Chandler says. "And wherever you have women put in incredibly desperate situations, you have prostitution."

While women of color make up only 21 percent of the general female population, they comprise more than 60 percent of the state prison population. And the vast majority of women are imprisoned for nonviolent offenses, often drug crimes linked to their male partners: 92 percent of women in federal prisons and 68 percent in state prisons are in for nonviolent and drug offenses. "The care women get in prison reflects our general attitudes toward poor women and women of color," Chandler says. "These women have very limited access to health care on the outside, and that's mirrored on the inside. We have clients dying of cervical cancer, which is a highly treatable, highly preventable disease. That is not an illness women should be dying of these days."

Lawyers and advocacy groups have fought successfully for improvements in health care at prisons across the country. But even so, change is slow in coming. In 1998 prisoners at Central California Women's Facility and the California Institute for Women, in Frontier, won a class action lawsuit alleging poor medical care by the state. But three years later, according to Chandler, few of the promised reforms have been implemented. The California Department of Corrections was even forced to return a \$750,000 federal grant for the survey and treatment of hepatitis C because they failed to use the money.

Possible solutions include alternative sentencing for nonviolent crimes, compassionate release or alternative sentencing for women with terminal illnesses and programs that allow women to maintain contact with their children. For example, the California Department of Corrections has instituted "mother-infant programs," allowing women to spend several-day intervals with their babies in apartments. Considering that about 80 percent of women prisoners nationwide are

"OUR TOUGH-ON-CRIME MORALS ARE BREEDING A HEALTH CRISIS. WE'LL HAVE THOUSANDS OF WOMEN DYING OF HIV AND HEPATITIS IN PRISON IN THE NEAR FUTURE."

mothers, this has a major effect on women's psychological and physical health. California also has a small community-based sentencing project for HIV-infected women, offering them alternatives to incarceration that include connections to social and treatment services.

While these programs have proven effective for the women involved, they are generally offered on an experimental basis and available to only a small percentage of prisoners. With the current trend of prisons slashing rehabilitative and educational programs in favor of increased security and new construction, it is doubtful alternative programs like this will ever be a top funding priority.

While there is organizing going on within women's prisons, the already desperate situation of inmates and the strict control they are under means it falls largely upon outside activists, lawyers and nonprofit groups to monitor prison conditions and fight for their rights. Chicago's Prison Action Committee is one example of effective organizing, hiring former prisoners to work with incarcerated women and men to urge reform.

Middle-class feminists who have tended to focus their efforts on abortion, the glass ceiling and other issues that personally affect them, they need to realize that the abuses

suffered by poor women in prison, and the socioeconomic conditions that lead to their imprisonment in the first place, are a travesty for all women. As increasing numbers of women continue to lose their safety net as a result of welfare reform, even more women are likely to turn to selling drugs, check forgery and other crimes to put food on the table. They are also more likely to fall into street life or domestic violence situations, or depending on men who sell drugs or otherwise commit crimes. Considering the dearth of living-wage jobs available to women with little education, not to mention the lack of affordable childcare, "a life of crime" may be the only way to survive.

Anyone concerned about social justice should be outraged that women who commit nonviolent crimes out of emotional and economic desperation are actually sentenced to endure rape, neglect, exposure to disease and mental and physical abuse. "Most women are in for nonviolent offenses," Chandler says. "But considering the way the prisons are run, they may end up with what are effectively death sentences." ■

Kari Lydersen is a reporter at the Washington Post Chicago bureau and associate editor of Streetwise.

IS ACE THE ANSWER?

In 1985, a small group of inmates at Bedford Hills, a maximum-security prison in upstate New York, met to discuss how other inmates were ostracizing two women. No one would sit with them in the TV room or use the showers when they were done. They were suspected, on the grounds that they went to the nurse too often, of having AIDS.

The handful of women wrote a letter to the prison superintendent, asking for more education about the disease. They didn't think the women should be shunned—but they weren't sure.

The inmates expected their letter to linger in the system, but it struck a chord with the prison superintendent. She brought in a series of speakers to discuss AIDS and HIV, but the lectures were so large and impersonal that the same women met again in frustration. They had a better idea: In 1988 they founded AIDS Counseling and Education (ACE), a peer

counseling group that would help inmates understand the disease and take it more seriously. Now, after 12 years, ACE has weathered countless challenges from prison administrators to emerge as one of the oldest inmate-run prison health collectives—and the first of its kind in a women's prison.

It was through a haze of half-information and deep social biases that the women of ACE set about building a curriculum to educate themselves and their fellow inmates about AIDS and HIV. Their workshops cover everything from a basic overview of what a virus is and how it replicates within your system to making treatment decisions and living with AIDS. ACE peer counselors offer support to women who are waiting for HIV test results and to those women with AIDS who are trying to care for themselves. In a grossly inadequate health care environment, ACE coun-

selors sit down with women before a visit to the doctor to help identify questions that they need answers to, and brace them for the often daunting challenge of extracting those answers from overworked and short tempered medical staff.

At the urging of the AIDS Institute, ACE turned their lesson plans into a book called *Breaking the Walls of Silence: AIDS and Women in a New York Maximum-Security Prison*. The book, first published in 1998, is both a health manual and the story of how ACE has kept alive: from building trust among the collective, to earning and keeping the respect of the prison administration. The book has been distributed to prisons across the country.

As just under 20 percent of women entering the New York State prison system are HIV positive, ACE remains a vital resource for inmates. Some members have left Bedford Hills

to find work in AIDS advocacy groups, teaching similar workshops to women in New York City who are at risk for AIDS. And the ACE Home Project, which also started inside the prison, allows women who have been released from the prison to keep counseling one another.

For the women at Bedford, many of whom are addicted to drugs, and few of whom are used to discussing their health—let alone a sexually transmitted disease—ACE may well save their lives. For the counselors, most of them coming from the same situations as their clients, the process of leading workshops and helping the women around them care for themselves and their bodies is profoundly empowering, as those women leave prison and return to their old homes with a sense of pride and responsibility they never expected to find in prison.

AMANDA B. HICKMAN

BRIDGING THE GAP

WHY WOMEN STILL DON'T GET EQUAL PAY

By DAVID MOBERG

When the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1963, feminists were wearing buttons emblazoned "59¢," reflecting how much women earned on average for every dollar earned by men. Today the buttons would read "72¢," a marker of progress and frustration on the road to gender equality on the job.

There is both statistical and anecdotal evidence that women, who now comprise nearly 47 percent of the labor force, have made significant gains since the '60s, especially in earning advanced degrees and moving into professional fields. Despite continuing evidence of corporate glass ceilings, women have assumed more high-profile positions in management, politics, nonprofit administration and operation of their own businesses.

But a closer look shows that the gains have not been uniformly shared—and in most cases, the closing of the gender pay gap has been a hollow victory. The main reason why women on average earn a higher percentage of the average man's income today is simple: Over the past quarter century, men's wages have been falling sharply in real, inflation-adjusted terms, while women's wages have increased modestly.

According to *The State of Working America*, an annual report prepared by the Economic Policy Institute, "falling real wages among men can explain 64.9 percent of the closing of the gender gap between 1979 and 1989; correspondingly, only 35.1 percent ... was due to women's rising real wages." In any case, even that spurious progress has slowed in the '90s.

If men's real wages had not fallen since 1979, as a joint study by the AFL-CIO and the Institute for Women's Policy Research reported last year, "women's earnings today would be only about 66 percent of men's, representing a remarkably small overall decline in the gender wage gap."

In addition, as economic inequality for the work force as a whole has grown since 1973, there has been growing inequality among women workers: Women in the top fifth of the work force have made significant gains, but women in the bottom half remain—in real terms—only slightly above where they stood a quarter century ago.



KEN FIRESTONE

Conservatives, led by Diana Furchtgott-Roth of the American Enterprise Institute, claim that the wage gap either has disappeared—or simply reflects women's choices and differences in

experience and other "human capital." Among people ages 27 to 33 who have never had a child, they argue, citing the National Longitudinal Study of Youth, women earn nearly 98 percent of what men do. Such a small slice of the work force, however, is not proof that gender inequities are vanishing, but simply a reminder that they often show up in complex ways.

In 1998, the President's Council of Economic Advisers analyzed the differences between men's and women's earnings, adjusting the data for a wide range of variables, including training, experience, occupation, industry and business size. After all such adjustments, there was still an unexplained difference of 12 percentage points between the incomes of men and women. "You could say that the whole 12 points is because of

other variables that can't be measured, or an element of measurement error, or all discrimination," explains Vicky Lovell of the Institute for Women's Policy Research. "My theory would be that a large portion is discrimination that women face."

That theory is supported by continued court findings of discrimination by gender (as well as race) at many large corporations, most recently Coca-Cola, but in recent years also companies such as Pepsi-Cola, Gateway, U.S. Airways, CoreStates Financial Institutions, Home Depot, Publix Supermarkets and others.

But much of the discrimination reflects a dual labor market, with jobs that are "female-dominated" such as retail clerks and librarians paying significantly less—to both women and men in those fields—than jobs in "male-dominated" or mixed-gender occupations. Workers in female-dominated occupations are paid roughly 18 percent less than they would if they worked in jobs outside what's derided as the "pink ghetto," according to the study by the AFL-CIO and the Institute for Women's Policy Research. If pay were raised in female-dominated jobs to levels comparable to those in the rest of the economy, the study concluded, 25 million women would together earn about \$89 billion a year more than they do now, and 4 million men would gain \$25 billion a year. The study estimates that pay equity would lift out of poverty more than half of poor single mothers over 18 and three-fifths of poor married women.

There is a wide variety of other reasons women often end up earning less than men, such as socialization that steers them to certain jobs, limited expectations about their leadership potential, and conflicts between the demands of work and family life. For example, argues Alyson Reed, executive director of the National Committee on Pay Equity: "If men earn more than women and two-parent families make a decision about who stays home with the kids, women often say, 'I make less than you, so I'll stay home,' and it becomes a never-ending cycle."

When women drop out of the work force to care for children or aging parents, they often suffer setbacks in careers, lose seniority, or are simply passed over for key assignments because there's an assumption that their careers will be disrupted. While some women may willingly make that choice, the absence of affordable, high-quality childcare (as well as decent pay for childcare workers), or an adequate range of supports for aging parents denies women a truly free choice. When men want to play a larger role in childcare or similar tasks, they also lose options or income as a result of unsupportive public policy.

Pay equity and changes in work and family policies are top political priorities for women, but they are not simply women's issues. For many years, polls have showed strong support from men for pay equity and other family-friendly employment policies, from paid family leave to elimination of mandatory overtime. But the overwhelming support has not been translated into an effective political movement.

There are a variety of legislative proposals in Congress and in roughly 30 states that would address pay equity and family issues. Since women are concentrated in the lowest pay categories, every effort to raise minimum wages, enact living wages or provide income supports—like the earned income tax credit—disproportionately helps women, especially women of color. Likewise, improving the rights and benefits for temporary and part-time workers would disproportionately aid women workers.

State and federal legislation directly addressing pay equity falls in two main categories. One approach would strengthen enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, such

as the bill introduced by Sen. Tom Daschle (D-South Dakota), which was narrowly defeated in the Senate last summer along partisan lines. The other, more far-reaching strategy—represented by legislation introduced by

Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa)—would provide for private litigation and government enforcement of discrimination laws where jobs of comparable worth are paid less. In some cases, such as in New Mexico this year, the first step is winning funding for a study of pay for comparable work. But there is strong employer opposition, even though many employers already have their own internal systems for evaluating skill levels of jobs.

There also has been a surge of organizing by labor unions among women workers, who for at least the past 15 years consistently have demonstrated a stronger interest in unionization than men. Belonging to a union makes a big difference to women, who make about 38 percent more, or \$157 a week on average, when they are in a union compared to nonunion women. But even among union workers, women make about 84 percent of what men make. The difference—while narrower than for men and women in general—appears to reflect the continued low levels of union density and power in many predominately female occupations, more than gender discrimination within contracts. "We can represent nursing home workers, but we don't represent enough of the industry and have enough power to bring them up to some other related occupation," explains Karen Nussbaum, director of the AFL-CIO Working Women's Department. "That's why you still have the pay gap."

Women are now joining unions at a faster rate than men, even though some unions have not fully adjusted their strategies to reflect the eagerness with which women want to organize. It is not a coincidence however, that many of the most successful and energetic organizing unions, such as the Hotel Workers (HERE), Service Employees (SEIU), garment workers (UNITE), public employees (AFSCME), and Communications Workers (CWA), are organizing more women. Nussbaum claims two-thirds of new union members were women in 1999 (partly reflecting the huge SEIU victory with 70,000 home care workers in Los Angeles). One of the largest current organizing drives in the country is an effort to organize 20,000 Delta flight attendants.

WORKERS IN FEMALE-DOMINATED OCCUPATIONS ARE PAID ROUGHLY 18 PERCENT LESS THAN THEY WOULD BE IN JOBS OUTSIDE THE "PINK GHETTO."

Looking only at National Labor Relations Board election results (and many non-NLRB organizing victories, such as in the hotel industry or public sector, are heavily female), Cornell University Professor Kate Bronfenbrenner found that women accounted for 55 percent of all workers organized last year. Her analysis also showed that unions were much less likely to win where white men predominated compared to workplaces with women or people of color. While unions won a little more than half of their NLRB elections last year, they won 62 percent of elections at workplaces where three-fourths of workers were women—and 83 percent of elections at sites where at least three-fourths of workers were women of color.

Bronfenbrenner also found that, compared to the early '80s, unions have nearly doubled the number of women organizers they employ (21 percent of the total now) and put at least one woman organizer on more than half of campaigns where a quarter or more of workers are women. Her figures show they should have women on every one of those campaigns, since they win nearly 25 percent more often when at least one woman organizer is involved.

Women respond to union drives favorably, Bronfenbrenner argues, because they are often poorly paid and lack benefits. They also have less at risk if they lose their jobs, compared to men who might already have a small hold on job security or a pension. Women and people of color are also less likely to

identify with the boss (who is not likely to be a minority or female). "The sense of collective action is much greater for women and people of color," she argues. "But white men have the lesson more instilled that you don't make it if you don't make it by yourself."

With more women in their ranks, work and family issues are also gaining new bargaining importance. In negotiations with the auto industry, for example, the United Auto Workers won financing for a fund that will provide a wide range of training and family assistance, such as a series of Ford-funded family service centers with 24-hour childcare, after-school programs, retiree programs and other services. More unions are now bargaining for flexibility in using sick leave, paid family leave, flexible work schedules, childcare assistance and other family-related issues. "We used to say that these were the first things to fall off the bargaining table," says Netsy Firestein, director of the Berkeley, California-based Labor Project for Working Families. "It's not so true today as more women are sitting at the bargaining table."

Despite the activity and progress, the movement of working women has not captured the public spotlight nor gained the political clout that it could and should, especially given the new dependence of the Democrats on working women voters. Without that political power, the progress of working women is likely to remain slow. And women, as well as men, will be the losers. ■

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THE HIP MAMA-FESTO

AND WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO ABOUT IT

BY ARIEL GORE

I just turned 30 and, as you can imagine, I've been damn busy. 30. It's the perfect time to do ... *everything*. In *Letters to a Young Feminist*, Phyllis Chesler warns readers not to marry before the age of 30. My best friend in high school used to insist that at 35, an unmarried woman qualified as an "old maid." So it's the perfect time to get hitched.

Gail Sheehy suggests that our thirties are the time to get serious about our careers. The "tryout twenties" are over and the "flourishing forties" are no time for a first job interview. My friends who, like me, had children in their teens and twenties report being mistaken for the nanny. My friends who had kids after 35 report infertility problems, endless medical tests and more than a few "older mom" comments. So at 30, I've finally hit the perfect childbearing age,

too. Even though I've done it all wrong (had my kid 10 years ago; no plans to marry; a career like any writer's: feast or famine at random intervals), I feel the mounting pressure.

If Americans are taking longer to grow up and longer to die, how come I'm supposed to pack an entire lifetime into five years? Because of the way our educational institutions, workplaces and cultural ideals about the family are arranged, the ideal childbearing age happens to coincide with the years most important to building a career.

How are women trying to change all of this? I recently asked a group of mama-friends about this. But their responses made me feel like a jerk for asking. "How are we trying to change this? How are we trying to survive it is more the ques-

tion," my friend Sarah, a teacher and single mother of two, fired back. "I bloody well have too much to do. I feel like I'm living three lives at once. What would be the ideal age to do all of this? As long as society attempts to segregate mothers and children from the privileged everybody else, any age is an age when a mother will be isolated from what has been her life,

from other mothers, from working and thinking, from the practical things we do to stay sane."

We fantasize about flex-time, a salary during early motherhood, a new culture in which it is understood that we have time to do it all at our own pace. But changing the world ends up on our to-do lists right after asking for a raise and finishing the laundry. Single moms like Sarah and me get occasional props for our plight. "I don't know how you do it," people say with an air of pity. But one of the bet-

ter-kept secrets in maternal circles is that married moms are pretty well screwed too.

The stinging reality is that the lifestyle a one-breadwinner family could once afford now requires two salaries to keep up. "In most of the committed-relationship-with-children households I know—mine included—both partners must work in order to get by," says my friend Alex. "For us, with four kids and three jobs between us, that means time is a jealously guarded commodity, adrenaline is a food group, and patience is virtually non-existent."

Most of us have nearly a hundred years here—time enough to do everything we choose. Retirement and college years are accepted as periods in our lives when we need extra financial help. But in post-welfare-reform America, we can only dream



of the European-style mothers' pensions. Instead we take a pay cut and try to swallow our indignation. "Two months after I accepted my first quasi-managerial job at age 30, the culmination of three years in my field, I found out I was pregnant," my friend Erin tells me. "The last two months of my pregnancy, I had insulin-dependent gestational diabetes and two to four medical appointments a week. Even though the corporation was on *Working Mother's* 'Best Companies To Work For' list, the absences didn't go over well. So when my leave was over, I didn't go back."

Making a workplace mother-friendly can be costly, but the truth is that most employers don't even bother to crunch the numbers. I've worked for one Internet start-up and visited many others where they have batting cages, free gourmet snack bars and on-site pet care for their "mascots."

"Where's the childcare?" I ask.

"Uh, no one's ever requested it," I've heard more than once. And maybe they haven't.

It's a rare mother who isn't woefully lacking in a sense of entitlement. But even when we ask for what we need, we tend to get a lot of shit. Children are seen as luxury items or as annoying little rugrats to be kept out of other people's hair. "So long as people have this idea that children are some sort of disease-ridden vermin to be kept segregated in schools and daycares and other people's homes, mothers, no matter what our ages, find ourselves alone," Sarah laments.

I wish she were wrong.

Here's a conversation I had with my 10-year-old daughter Maia recently:

"I feel like you do too many jobs," she said

"I do do too many jobs," I replied.

"I know. That's what I feel."

"What are we going to do about it?"

"I don't know. Maybe I can help you with some of the stuff. Like dishes. I like doing dishes."

"Cool."

Then, one week later, while doing the dishes, she said: "I feel like we do too many jobs."

"We do do too many jobs."

"I know. That's what I feel."

"What are we going to do about it?"

"I don't know. Maybe we can eat out more often."

In the spirit of "what are we going to do about it?" I asked some mamas to weigh in with their top agenda items for the mama-revolution. Here are the highlights:

Inga: "First and foremost, we need women to band together around the concept that all mothers are working mothers! We've let them pit us against each other—it's the ol' 'divide and conquer' thing. We need to take responsibility for ourselves, each other and each other's children."

Monika: "Mamas who bust butt and stay home need to be considered just as valuable as those who bust butt and work outside the home."

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Anne: "We need high-quality, affordable daycare now. Daycare includes: infant care, toddler care, preschool, elementary school (with after-school programs), middle school (with after-school programs) and high school (with, you guessed it, after-school programs). This is my No. 1 source of anxiety as a parent."

Jennifer: "We need sane gun control laws."

Dana: "Mamas working outside the home should get subsidized for our daycare/educational solution of choice—meaning \$12,000 per year for the grandmama, neighbor or home-school co-op, plus \$2,500 per year for artistic/passionate pursuits. Any man or woman who chooses to stay home from a successful or imagined career in order to take care of the babes gets \$35,000 per year and a relief allowance for periodic reprieve. It's time we admitted that going it alone is a burnout job just like police work and fire fighting: Mamas should get full retirement after 20 years of service."

Laura: "Survival. We all need food, shelter, health care and clothing. We must do whatever it takes to ensure that no child goes hungry, no matter whose toes get stepped on."

Sierra: "Diapers cost too much. HMOs suck. Teen mothers and welfare mothers are demonized as witches. Apathy and frustration are hard to avoid—but avoid them! Stage public nurse-ins every place where feeding our babies is considered 'obscene.' Demand child- and family-friendly environments everywhere."

Nanci: "What we need is true sharing of the roles of parenting if there is a partner involved. No more glorifying Dad or

partner for taking the kids on a 'special outing.' True equality."

Doni-Marie: "We need to make motherhood a hot topic—the issue of the species. Otherwise we'll just have to go on a breeding strike. We have to muster up some self-respect and gain some visibility. We need to be the bold new role models of motherhood beyond Betty Crocker and Super Career Mom."

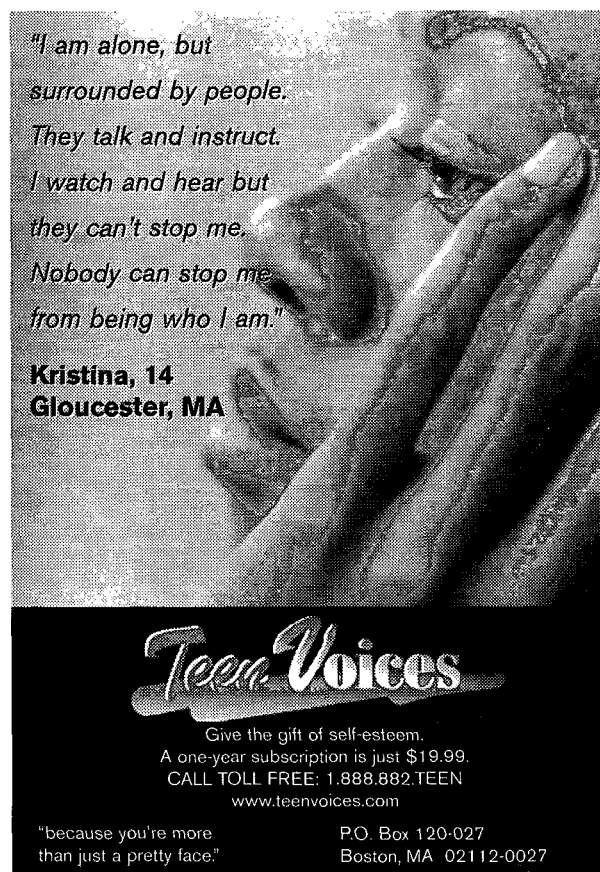
And that is the maternal feminist agenda. It's wide open for additions and adaptations. The important thing is to be gentle with yourself and with your family so that we can all live soulfully in this incomplete revolution—saving the rage to fuel social transformation. Look at all of the energy we spend beating ourselves up for our failure to adjust to this insane world where mothers work double shifts and shoulder the blame for everything from their children's bad behavior to global economic crises. Now imagine we turned that energy outward and used to it make this world our home.

I'm sometimes asked, "Can't you feminists come up with a new schtick?" Sure. As soon as we have a salary for motherhood, the end of age and sex discrimination in the workplace, the Equal Rights Amendment, and on-site childcare at all schools and places of employment. As soon as having kids at 15 or 45 are life-choices, not reproductive prisons and economic necessities—as soon as all that happens, I'll write an entirely different essay. ■

Ariel Gore is the editor of *Hip Mama*, and the author of *The Hip Mama Survival Guide* and *The Mother Trip*.



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Women of the World

By Tracie McMillan

The “third wave” of feminism has been floating around for a few years now. It has managed to give rise to a few young feminist media figures, à la Naomi Wolf and Rebecca Walker, and a new feminist organiza-

Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future
By Jennifer Baumgardner
and Amy Richards
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
416 pages, \$15

tion, The Third Wave Foundation. This generation has also found its way into women’s studies courses across the country, stemming from the publication of a few anthologies such as Walker’s *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism* and Barbara Findlen’s *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation*. But the new generation’s answer to feminism has lacked anything even approaching a coherent, unified vision—until publication of *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future*.

Jennifer Baumgardner—a freelance writer found in the pages of *Jane and Nerve* as well as *Out* and *The Nation*—and Amy Richards—a founding member of the Third Wave Foundation—start off strong with a rousing collection of statistics on the status of American women in 1970. These first few pages give any young feminist a startling sense of just how much we owe the second wave. From there, the book settles into a combination of history lessons, media analysis, personal experiences and interviews with feminists young and old.

Concerned largely with the interaction between the second and third waves of feminism, the book expends considerable energy dissecting the defining characteristics of the latter and how it plays off the politics of the former. With an almost tedious attention to detail, Baumgardner and Richards illustrate how “Generation X” is the first generation to grow up with feminism “in the water”—present in everyday life—and pinpoint areas of contention

between the two waves. They forthrightly call on the second wave to accept leadership from young women, and chastise them for failing to recognize the feminist activism already taking place among the young.

Emphasizing the notion that feminism begins with women’s shared experiences, the book also pays homage to the consciousness-raising groups of the ’60s. This leads to one of the book’s recurring themes: the “click,” that moment where women realize that something is being denied them for no other reason than gender.

When the authors shift away from the second wave, they enthusiastically depict the current state of feminist activism as a wide-ranging “diaspora”: a myriad of feminists doing work around women’s issues. Baumgardner and Richards confess that the lack of a focused and powerful movement is a problem, but one marked by an energetic and inspiring series of disconnected local struggles, ranging from a woman agitating for “crip rights” for the handicapped to 60-person riot grrrl conferences. They tout the vast and

**A few brown faces
do not exonerate
the movement from
its own race and
class prejudices.**

varied nature of the feminist movement, arguing that it signals a “pre-emergent” phase for a “revolutionary movement [that] will eventually emerge from where young people are starting today.”

The authors’ calls to activism are invigorating, and it’s refreshing to hear young feminists admit that for all the good that a cultural version of feminism may do, it takes real political work to actually change society. The authors call for radical change, for envisioning a society in which gender

poses no limits on one’s potential. With all the hoopla surrounding youth activism on issues of globalization, it’s heartening to hear coherent, young voices advocating for principled and patient action coupled with a vision for changing society in the long haul.

Still, one wonders if there isn’t anything more innovative or inspiring in the third wave beyond being pro-sex, culture-driven and continuing the struggles of the second wave. Most pointedly: What about coherent, substantive critiques of race and class that build on the mistakes of our foremothers? The authors cite books known for their scathing critiques of race and feminism, (Dorothy Roberts’ *Killing the Black Body*, Angela Davis’ *Women, Race and Class*, bell hooks’ *Ain’t I a Woman?*) but don’t include the arguments they make about race. While Baumgardner and Richards refer to having a “commitment to workers,” advocate for strong social provision and name-drop feminist women of color, there is little in the way of an actual critique of race and class.

For example, instead of addressing the racist rhetoric Margaret Sanger employed in her birth control crusades, she is repeatedly mentioned as a near-sainted feminist foremother, with not a word about her alliance with eugenicists. The suffragettes are held up as strong, mighty women, but their willingness to trade off the black vote for their own is not mentioned. Instead, the authors simply say that Sojourner Truth supported suffrage and that civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer was a feminist too, all but insinuating that having a few brown faces present in the movement exonerates it from its own race and class prejudices.

Instead of bringing forth constructive arguments about how feminism might need to change if it is to represent all women, they universalize women’s issues, arguing that “reproductive rights are inherently a multiracial issue.” While it’s true that women of all colors are affected by sexism, glossing over the layered and complex nature of how that plays out is problematic at best. It’s a superficial treatment of race, one that finds fault in the movement’s lack of diversity instead of its lack of political

projects that speak to poor women or women of color.

It's absolutely inspiring to read the chronicling of my generation's feminist activism, and to hear young women emphasizing the vital importance of being political activists instead of just cultural ones. Still, it's frustrating and disappointing to hear so little substantive debate or critique of race and class, the two most daunting obstacles to building a real movement. Our generation needs a feminist manifesta—a declaration of our politics, our priorities and where our allegiances lie. But what it needs even more, and what Baumgardner and Richards have glossed over, is a real interrogation of *why* feminism has been identified as a white women's movement and what feminism needs to do to change that. ■

Tracie McMillan is the editor of the activist, the magazine of the Young Democratic Socialists.

Tongue Tied

By G. Pascal Zachary

Brief books that suggest the vastness of a topic while delivering a sense of completion are rightly a model for popular writing and scholarship alike. In *English as a Global Language* (1997) David Crystal, a British

Language Death
By David Crystal
Cambridge University Press
198 pages, \$19.95

authority on language, gave a thorough and at times brilliant account of the rise of English and its future as an essential "second language," whose variety is so great that it is reasonable to ask, as he did, whether English will "fragment."

English as a Global Language is the standard work—at a mere 142 pages—on the role of English in the world, and his

judgements are holding up remarkably well. Perhaps emboldened by his success, Crystal has tried to do the same—deliver a brief, authoritative essay, without obtrusive scholarly trappings—on the subject of the impending disappearance of thousands of the world's languages.

The facts and forecasts are stark: 96 percent of the world's estimated 6,000 languages are spoken by only 4 percent of the people. One-quarter of the world's languages are spoken by less than 1,000 people each and a staggering 5,000 languages have fewer than 100,000 speakers each. By his reckoning, half of the world's languages could disappear this century, and only 600 tongues are "safe" from the threat of extinction.

Why does this matter? This question is more complicated than it seems. From one perspective, too many languages



IN THE BEAUTY PARLOR BY PHYLLIS EVEN

Women, then as now, have plenty of cause to be furious. Pieces here deal with wage inequality; the casual dismissal of female intelligence and creativity; "little rapes" (the daily catcalls, gropes and unwanted advances); and with consumerist stereotypes, or, as Ellen Willis writes, "a lot of bullshit ideology created by and for white males." But more than anything, *Dear Sisters* is eloquent evidence that, as with similar historical movements for social justice, women's liberation (and feminism, its latter-day ideological cousin) would, if fulfilled, work to the benefit of all.

Of course, that fulfillment has never quite arrived. Yes, today many more than 10 percent of doctors are women—but how shocking it is to read through *Dear Sisters* and see how many of these broadsides remain perfectly apropos, how many of the patient arguments and furious condemnations are just as relevant today as ever. From Pat Mainardi's "The Politics of Housework" and Ann Koedt's "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" to, more scathingly, Sue Katz's "Smash Phallic Imperialism!", these essays, cartoons and pamphlets represent not just historical curiosities, but spurs to an examination of how things are now, in the world of Sleater-Kinney and RU-486 and Senator Hillary.

Ben Winters

Dear Sisters (Basic Books, \$30) is a stylish, far-ranging and thoughtfully annotated anthology of the women's liberation movement, edited by historians Rosalyn Daxandall and Linda Gordon. Arriving as both a celebration of all the movement has achieved and a galling reminder of how many of its political goals remain unattained, the authors have chosen articles

mostly from the '60s and '70s—the period of the movement's "most yeasty ferment, creativity and mass participation." *Dear Sisters* is a chorus of brilliant and enthusiastic voices (sometimes discordant, as radicals cry out their frustration with moderates) from what should be a bygone era: These are messages in a bottle now washed up on a distressingly familiar shore.

divide and isolate people; they impose added burdens on communication, even misunderstandings that fuel conflict. The Biblical "Tower of Babel" fable suggests the way in which language divisions have long been viewed as bedeviling humanity.

But thinking has changed: We no longer live in a one-size-fits-all world, even if the pressures for linguistic conformity are rising. Crystal, as do other language scholars, finds value in diversity. The more languages, the more ways of thinking, the more potential benefits. This reasoning is so compelling that a vigorous movement in defense of marginal languages has sprung up in recent decades. The ranks include those devoted to documenting (and aiding) the last known speakers of a language, a poignant practice that seems to underscore the apparent pell-mell race to global homogenization.

Every language has its own beauty, of course, but the trouble with the diversity argument is that since so many languages are obscure already, the benefits to the world from keeping these languages alive aren't clear. Crystal is more confident about the potential for keeping some languages alive, against great odds. He gives compelling examples of success (Gaelic in Ireland and the Mohawk language in the United States, for instance). Though it isn't clear how best to keep languages alive, "revitalization schemes can work," he concludes. But they require political power and money, and there are legitimate differences over tactics. Should many tiny languages—spoken, say, among different tribes of forest-dwellers in Papua—be consolidated into a single vernacular in order to put weight behind it and thus forestall its death? Or is every dialect to be viewed as pure and irreplaceable?

The problem isn't simply technical, but political, social and economic. "Languages need communities in order to live," Crystal notes. "So, only a community can save an endangered language." How communities defend themselves against outsiders—and how they use the wider world to construct new realities for their members—raises too many questions for Crystal to handle in his brief primer. Whereas in *English as a Global Language* Crystal could get his arms around his topic and issue the last

word, he cannot do so in the 198 pages of *Language Death*. Crystal admirably leaves us with a passionate plea for why we should care about the death of languages, but it will take more scholarship, and harder thinking, for us to gain a surer sense of how to save languages and what is lost when we don't.

Crystal raises "the distinct possibility of a world with only one language in it a few hundred years hence," but the immediate future raises a rather different scenario than the familiar one of English *über-alles*. The reality is that major regional languages, such as Spanish and Mandarin Chinese, are colonizing local

languages as once-remote communities are brought into a wider net of social and commercial relationships. So rather than underscoring the perils of a monocultural world, the language battles of tomorrow may be more about the way challengers to the hegemony of English gain strength by wiping out small languages. In this battle, defenders of small languages will have to show a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of language death. ■

G. Pascal Zachary is the author of *The Global Me, a study of identity, commerce and culture in rich nations*.

Getting Bitter

By Hillary Frey

On February 7, 1964, the Beatles traveled to America for the first time to appear on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. On Pan Am Flight 101, in mid-air halfway across the Atlantic, a young and doubtful George Harrison

Lennon Remembers

By Jann S. Wenner

Verso

151 pages, \$20

worried to a journalist traveling with the band, "They've got everything over there, What do they want us for?" Thirty-six years later, one might ask: What do we still want them for? Although they are no more, the Beatles have a grip on America that appears to be as strong as ever.

There's a new Beatles CD out, comprised of the Fab Four's chart-toppers and simply titled *1*—which itself debuted at No. 1—and a 2-ton piece of eye-candy called *The Beatles Anthology* that's destined to become the most popular coffee-table book in history. The "first and only official" Beatles Web site has just launched (www.thebeatles.com), while Paul McCartney and Yoko Ono, whose talents in the visual arts are by no means similar, each have solo shows on exhibition. A new cookbook called *She Came in Through the Kitchen Window: Recipes Inspired by the Beatles and Their Music* (sample dish: "I Am the Scrambled Eggman") has just been published,

while movie director Milos Forman recently announced that the Beatles were crucial to ending the Cold War. In the midst of this Beatlemania with everything but the band itself, lefty publisher Verso has reprinted a small book of interviews with the notoriously "clever" Beatle called *Lennon Remembers*.

Coinciding with what would have been Lennon's 60th birthday on October 9 (and the 20th anniversary of his murder on December 8, 1980), as well as the re-infection of Beatles fever among the masses, re-issuing *Lennon Remembers* appears to have been a shrewd marketing move for noncommercial Verso. Thankfully, it's more complicated than that. Not only do all profits from this and previous editions of *Lennon Remembers* go to gun-control projects, there's something deliciously subversive about its publication amid the new hoopla. The interviews, conducted in 1970 by then 24-year-old *Rolling Stone* editor Jann Wenner, first published in *Rolling Stone* and then book form in 1971, are at their core about deflating the Beatles myth, not perpetuating it.

In *Lennon Remembers*, John Lennon candidly (for lack of a stronger word) discusses his first solo album after the Beatles' breakup (*Plastic Ono Band*), his early days with Paul and George, drugs, Yoko (who sat in during the interviews), Beatles business, songwriting, other pop stars, religion, primal scream

therapy and lots of other stuff. The dynamic between Wenner and Lennon changes from question to question; Lennon's mood shifts constantly throughout the book. It's a kick to read Lennon in this long interview format, to experience him unfiltered in a way so many journalists never allowed; he wasn't at all a saint, nor did he want to be.

Remembering the first time he and George took LSD—unbeknownst to them, a dentist friend slipped it in their coffee—Lennon recalls his early days with a laugh: "It seemed to go on all night. ... And then George somehow or another managed to drive us home in his mini. We were going about ten miles an hour, but it seemed like a thousand. ... George was going, 'Don't make me laugh!' Oh God! It was just terrifying. But it was fantastic."

There are other light points—mentions of certain songs, bed-ins with Yoko, Lennon's inability to remember which Beatles album came first, second, third—but for the most part, *Lennon Remembers* is a heavy book. Throughout, Lennon works hard to ameliorate any debt owed the Beatles, and to establish himself as an artist in his own right. Toward the end of the book, Wenner asks, "What were the Beatles?" Lennon responds:

I don't believe in the Beatles—there's no other way of saying it, is there? I don't believe in them, whatever they were supposed to be in everybody's head, and including our own for a period. It was a dream. That's all. I don't believe in the dream anymore. But I made me mind up not to talk about all that shit. I'm sick of it.

Distancing himself from Paul McCartney, he goes on:

Listen, people like me are aware of their genius so-called at ten, eight, nine. I always thought I was—why has nobody discovered me? ... I was different, I was always different! Why didn't anybody notice me? ...

But that's what makes me what I am! It comes out that people like me have to save themselves, because we get fucking kicked! Nobody says it! [Frank] Zappa's there screaming, "Look at me, I'm a genius for fuck's sake, what do I have to do to prove to you son-of-a-bitches what I can do and who I am and don't dare fuckin' criticize my work like that! You who don't know anything about it!" Fucking bullshit! I know what Zappa's going through! And a half! I'm just coming out of it now. ... Fuck you all! If nobody can recognize what I am, fuck 'em! And Yoko too, fuckin' hell!

Is this the black-leather-clad, mop-topped Liverpool boy who sang "Love Me Do?"

Lennon Remembers will be a bumpy ride for the everyday Beatles fan. It's often an angry book, always unsentimental. Lennon's memories aren't sweet, or even fond; despite the implication of the book's title, Lennon doesn't remember so much as he blurts. His early life, growing up under Aunt Mimi's firm hand and visiting his mother, Julia, while skipping school, is avoided. "Fifth Beatle" Stuart Sutcliffe—once Lennon's best friend—and early rocker days at the Cavern Club are given little consideration; his days in art school have apparently been forgotten (at one point, Lennon actually asks, "Why didn't they put me in art school?"); Lennon's loaded relationship with Beatles manager Brian Epstein is touched upon only briefly, and

superficially at that. Although footnotes help to clarify some lesser known names and events—the roadies, managers, lawyers and various characters from Beatles history—they clutter the portrait of Lennon at times more than they help complete it.

This is not to say that *Lennon Remembers* doesn't pay off—it does. However, to reap its substantial rewards, it's best to have a copy of *Plastic Ono Band* on hand at all times, as well as *Sgt. Pepper's* and the "White Album." I would also suggest treating *Lennon Remembers* as a companion volume to Philip Norman's excellent 1981 Beatles biography *Shout: The Beatles in Their Generation*. As the Verso book picks up where Norman leaves off, the two fit together quite nicely.

In his introduction to the new edition,

Wenner offers us this directive: "It's important to remember in reading this book that in 1970 the Beatles were the biggest phenomenon on earth—no kidding—'more popular than Jesus,' in John's words." But why?

While it's Lennon's talking that makes the book worth reading, the thrill derived today from *Lennon Remembers*, even with material formerly deleted for "reasons of discretion" restored, is hardly due to the shocking nature of his judgements: the mean things he says about Paul's solo work or the way he dismisses George's guitar playing. It's the rawness of the material, and the truth of the effort—both of which are timeless. It's Wenner's tough questions and Lennon's sharp, often skewed answers, which so nakedly demonstrate his unique combination of charisma, wit, self-consciousness and cockiness more than any cut from *Help!* It's that magazines don't publish interviews like this today, and that modern pop stars aren't interesting enough to make them possible. ■

Hillary Frey is assistant literary editor of *The Nation*.



DAVID MCNEWMUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

Liberté, Égalité, Vérité

By Carl Bromley

There's a word some of France's cockier film critics use to describe the more arty films the French industry churn out, films like *Alice* is *Having an Affair with Marcel* while

Pola X

Directed by Leos Carax

It All Starts Today

Directed by Bertrand Tavernier

Human Resources

Directed by Laurent Cantet

Walking Her Dog—"nombriliste," or navel-gazing. What's their solution? A dose of shock therapy to the subsidized film industry, a few more films with a little more testosterone, perhaps even Gerard Depardieu buffing up? "The remedy looks worse than the disease," Daniel Singer commented when ideas like this were mooted a few years back.

But at its best, there is something peculiar and refreshingly different about French cinema—a symptom of its distinguished auteurist heritage but also a reflection of France's radically different economic, political and cultural reflexes, which have led to some of the most politically daring films in recent memory. Three films in particular deal with what Singer described as "the discontent pent up below the glittering surface of our smug consumer society," and, particularly in the wake of the huge revolt in the winter of 1995, the forms of struggle against the advancing neoliberal tide.

Leos Carax, who's probably too old now to be dubbed the *enfant terrible* of French cinema, finds poetry in squalor, incorporating, as Jean Douchet has noted, "a sensation of lightness and vanished celestial grace." However, his new film, *Pola X*—which is based on Melville's difficult novel *Pierre, or the Ambiguities*—moves from lightness to dark. Carax has said that he spent the time since his last film, the big-budget

meltdown *Lovers on the Bridge*, "in hell"; *Pola X* is his report back.

In a Normandy forest, Pierre (Guillaume Depardieu) is a cult novelist who lives with his domineering mother (Catherine Deneuve). He is preparing to marry his fragrant, flawless fiancée Lucie (Delphine Chuillot), but there's trouble in paradise. Meeting his best friend Thibault, Pierre senses he is being spied on by a stranger. This unnerves him, but also unravels another Pierre, a brooding soul on a collision course with the clean, pastoral surfaces that surround him.

When he discovers the spy is his traumatized half-sister Isabelle (Katerina Golubeva), who prowls like a wolf child in the local forest (she is in fact a refugee from the Balkans, where

vocalize Europe's inner demons, which leap out and possess Pierre, give him life and turn him on a wilder course. The Gothic qualities that were previously intimated—aristocracy, old castles, enchanted forests, incest, bisexuality—are unleashed and Carax's filter gets darker. Pierre abandons his old life, dumps his bride-to-be, takes off for Paris and takes up with Isabelle. The couple relocate to an abandoned industrial warehouse that has been recolonized by a bizarre collective of industrial noise musos and urban terrorists—imagine Sonic Youth and the Baader-Meinhof gang as your neighbors and you get the idea.

Pola X, though stylistically similar to his previous films, is light years from their romanticism. Carax puts on a brutal show, from the opening sequence of World War II stock footage of graveyards being bombed to Scott Walker's incendiary score, to the subjection of Depardieu's body to the kind of extreme violence and graphic sex that would make Joe Lieberman swoon.

Ultimately *Pola X* is a record of failure, of rage run amok. Both Pierre and the terrorists want the imagination to seize power, but their means of struggle are isolationist and elitist. For Pierre, solitude, renunciation and his love of Isabelle will seed his great novel, while the revolutionary sect's only incursions into civil society are terroristic. Rage without grassroots breeds narcissism. By the film's end, Pierre is reduced to a pathetic hobble, his world in ruin and told his new literary work "reeks of plagiarism."

The characters in Bertrand Tavernier's new film *It All Starts Today* survive a different hell. In a former mining town suffering from post-industrial malaise, the colliery tower remains as a bitter reminder of better times, while local politicians sell their souls and a lot more to rid the town of

its "germinal" image.

In the midst of this is Daniel Lefebvre (Philippe Torreton), the despairing head of a local elementary school who has to "babysit" the children from the town's many "problem families." He's a local hero, a model "progressive" school teacher



Human Resources

Pierre's late father was once a French ambassador in the '70s), he declares, "All my life I've waited for something to push me beyond all this."

This remarkable scene is made all the more disturbing by the haunting, high pitch of Golubeva's voice: She seems to

whose devotion to his pupils and staff is extraordinary, even if he laments that he's the only one on staff who keeps up with his union dues or remembers the words to the "Internationale." But Daniel, his staff, students and parents are subject to endless calamity: broken families, incest, domestic violence, malnourishment and alcoholism. No wonder Daniel is always on the verge of quitting.

For the most part, Tavernier frames Daniel's time with his students with a direct and unblinking eye, though he counters this with scenes of Daniel driving through the surrounding countryside, struggling with his professional calling—he's a frustrated poet—and his coalminer father, from whom he is somewhat estranged. Tavernier's optic here is grander, giving us a sense of the local soil and the local past. But he also shows Daniel is at one remove from the people he agonizes over. He has options, they don't. If there is a problem with this film, it's that the lives of the poor are almost always mediated by middle-class "caring" professionals. Only Daniel has a thirst for anger and struggle; his "clients" have only time for resignation and our pity.

But the film's end, where the kids seem to take over and show that all is not lost, is joyful and very moving, and reminded me of why I like Tavernier so much. His image of collective struggle, even if it is of kids transforming their school into a work of art and the old colliery band blowing their horns again, is an antidote to *Pola X's* slick pessimism and continues

the generous spirit of solidarity in his films, from *The Judge and the Assassin* and *'Round Midnight* to his recent swashbuckler *Revenge of the Musketeers*.

Capital, of course, would love to erase solidarity and class conflict from our political vocabulary. But Laurent Cantet's remarkable and psychologically complex feature debut, *Human Resources*, centers on the impossibility of such an erasure.

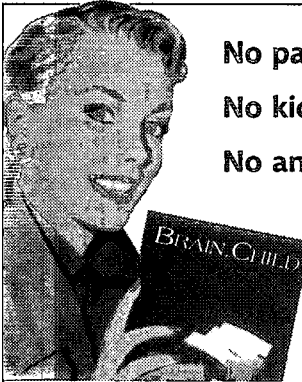
Franck (Jelil Lespert, the only professional actor in the cast) is a factory worker's son who returns to his father's factory as a trainee manager with a special responsibility to introduce the 35-hour workweek. Franck's a likable fellow but rather proud of himself, full of the claptrap that business schools fill their graduates with about workplace consultation, flexibility, competitiveness and "capitalism with a human face." No wonder his old friends soon desert him.

But Franck's father (a great, understated Jean-Claude Vallod) is proud that his son is joining the ranks of management. He's a "company man" who knows his place on the shop floor, and he's squeamish about Madame Arnoux, the shop steward who lives and breathes class warfare. Franck is also embraced by his father's wily boss, who says he wants to put all of the youngster's grand, third-wayish ideas to work. But Franck's a sucker; eventually he learns that he is being used to screw the union, the workers and ultimately his own flesh and blood.

Cantet has said that his film's basic argument is that "though we want to declare class struggle obsolete, it's still relevant and, in the end, it still has a deep impact on society." Cantet uses the father-son relationship to dramatize this, but he raises it to a higher artistic plane with the portrayal of Franck's tormented Jekyll-and-Hyde self, caught between the shop floor and the bosses. And the severe and feisty Madame Arnoux (Danielle Mélador) is especially striking: The hardball performance of Mélador, a real-life militant—Cantet's actors were selected according to their real-life professions—is a taste of what she gives real bosses.

The characters in these films, and similarly in Erik Zonka's recent *Dreamlife of Angels* and the Dardennes brothers' *Rosetta*, live in a world with no escape (or so they're told), in which there is no alternative but to fight for escape anyway. France's filmmakers face similar dilemmas, with internal and external pressures to be more commercial, which will probably be exacerbated now that Vivendi, the giant French conglomerate, is going into Hollywood. One can only hope that Messieurs Carax, Tavernier and Cantet and their colleagues keep up the fight, because few films have managed to take the temperature of this potentially radical moment and its contradictions with such *puissance*. □

Dedicated to Daniel Singer, 1926-2000.



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Sydney B. Spiegel, author of ALL EMPIRES DIE!

was fired in 1973 for "inability to cooperate with the school board and administration." The successful plaintiff in *Spiegel vs. Board of Education*, he was restored to his classroom in Cheyenne by order of the Wyoming Supreme Court, 1976: "We hold employees have a right to criticize employers." His book (\$13.95, Pentland Press) is available at your local and internet bookstores.



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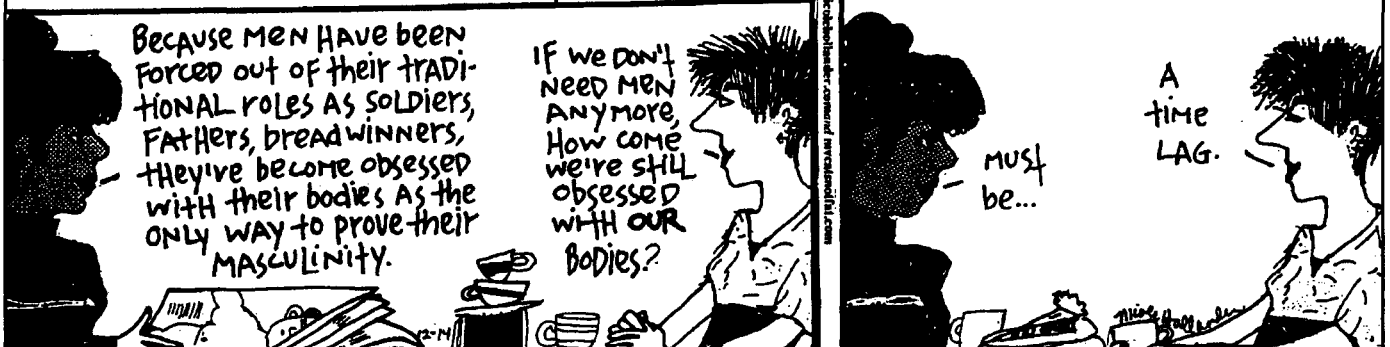
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SYLVIA

BAD GIRL CHATS ABOUT BIOLOGY



By Nicole Hollander

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Continued from page 38

then political orphans, often the local Birch organizer, bandying about the Society's comforting slogan "less government and more responsibility," was the only game in town. Soon Birch acolytes were hustling around in chapters scattered throughout the country. They disseminated bad ideas, and worse manners (stalling meetings, infiltrating school boards, monopolizing letters pages), according to suggestions from Welch at the home office in Belmont, Massachusetts. Members, some quite wealthy and famous, regularly defected as they found other, saner outlets for their conservative instincts (always, however, leaving better informed about how to effect political change than when they joined). The diehards remained—and could have toiled in obscurity forever, but for their success.

When Welch urged Birchers to demand the impeachment of Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren in late 1960, the campaign caught on. The press took notice of the thousands of letters suddenly pouring into the Capitol. Astonishing passages from Robert Welch's writings were read into the *Congressional Record*; in one, Welch accused Eisenhower of being a Moscow-directed agent. And the John Birch Society—in a phenomenon forgotten in all Kennedy retrospectives—became, for a short time, along with the Bay of Pigs and the Berlin Wall, one of the most talked about subjects in America.

This ironic heyday was important for reasons far beyond the group's meager political influence. The startling emergence of the John Birch Society had a good deal to do with how the opinion-molders came to (mis)interpret rising right-wing sentiment itself. World War II was still fresh in people's minds. Intellectuals were swept up in an idea that the mass mind was easily swayed by demagogues peddling panaceas, advancing ideas that deviated dangerously from the liberal center, whose truth was seen as self-evident. "Far-right" and "far-left" both, it was believed, were viruses with the potential to rot the delicate body of pluralist democracy itself. Birchers were thus taken both too seriously (as the leading edge of a potential fascist takeover) and not seriously enough (as people too childish and mentally unstable to grasp the truth of modern life; as cases to be studied, not adversaries to be reckoned with).

Liberals thus primed themselves to be utterly blindsided when "less government and more responsibility" became a message to build a majority. The John Birch Society also became a scapegoat for the crazy-making qualities of the Cold War itself. "Birchers" were isolated as the crazy ones—even as ordinary Army recruits watched training films such as *Red Nightmare*, narrated by *Dragnet*'s Jack Webb, which depicted spies in an ersatz American small town deep within the Soviet interior, training in the indigenous American arts of soda-fountain-sipping and cracker-barrel-joshing in order to infiltrate God's Country and then take it over.

But the only people more scared of the Birchers than liberals were conservatives who were beginning to organize for serious political power on the national level. The act of identifying, isolating and purging the Birch taint from institutions like *National Review*, Young Americans for Freedom, and the Goldwater presidential and Reagan gubernatorial campaigns was one of the key trials-by-fire that tempered the conservative movement to fight and win in the '80s and '90s. The Birchers were the foil. Without them, the plane might never have gotten off the ground at all.

Meanwhile, the Society itself patiently soldiered on, even as

the "John Birch Society" faded from the cultural radar screen after the early '60s. Organizationally, the group remained determined and strong, with fits and starts over the decades, its central office issuing forth veritable blizzards of paper to a genuine grassroots constituency. The conspiracy theories have been elaborated and updated (now, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dreaded "insiders" who pull the strings are all the more visible). Birchers are occasionally successful in energizing local campaigns against things like sex education. The case for the normalization of the presidential impeachment strategy was a staple in its magazine, *New American*, all through the '90s.

Its most recent success has been in disseminating the theory that the Hong Kong company chosen to operate the Panama Canal (which has no Chinese employees and also operates most of the major ports in Great Britain) is actually the leading edge of a Chinese Communist takeover. You would have to be insane to believe that, right? Yet no less an establishmentarian than Caspar Weinberger argued, in an editorial in *Forbes*, that the Chinese presence in Panama is "the biggest threat to the canal" in history.

It seems the John Birch Society will always be there to remind us that the relationship between the mainstream and the extremes is ever more ironic than it's supposed to be. For lefties far-out enough to be used to everyone thinking they're kooks, too, there might even be something inspiring to the lesson. ■

Rick Perlstein is the author of *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Undoing of the American Consensus*, forthcoming from Hill & Wang.

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Fringe Benefits

By Rick Perlstein



People forgot Pat. There Ralph Nader sits, despised and accursed, saddled with the blame for, as of this writing (now there's a phrase you've learned to hate), "stealing" some 97,000 Florida votes from Albert Gore Jr. Meanwhile Pat Buchanan has gotten off scot-free after poaching several times the margin of difference between the two major-party candidates as well. I like to speculate that he might have even gotten enough to cover the difference from members of the John Birch Society, drawn to the polls in high numbers for the historic prospect of backing one of their own: California Birch leader Ezola Foster, Buchanan's vice-presidential running mate. Think about it: The John Birch Society might have decided the fate of the Republic.

The Birchers are just the kind of persistent outliers that have always had their effect on American politics, but who must ever remained doomed—like us, we left-wing loons—to suffer only the enormous condescension of consensus-addled elites who only know how to think about political actors that poll higher than 15 percent. It is true that the John Birch Society has worked remarkably hard to make it remarkably hard for anyone but a partisan to take it seriously. But it has also put a discernable imprint on American political culture for more than 40 years.

The John Birch Society was founded by Robert Harold Winborne Welch, a rural child genius who entered the University of North Carolina at the age of 12, passed through unsuccessful stints as a Naval Academy cadet, Harvard Law

student and aspiring writer, and ended up a sales executive at his brother's candy firm in Massachusetts. There the self-evident key to human happiness was revealed to him: capitalism, pure and simple, stripped clean of any government taint. Then he looked around in the '30s and '40s and noticed that government was getting bigger, not smaller, and reacted as only a narcissistic isolated child genius could: He decided it had to be a conspiracy. Unmasking it became his life's work.

In the '50s his investigations proved agreeable to an ever growing cohort of wealthy, right-wing manufacturing entrepreneurs enraged that the first Republican president in 20 years seemed utterly uninterested in rolling back the New Deal. Instead, Dwight D. Eisenhower declared Roosevelt's reforms were here to stay—even, on occasion, expanding them. In December 1958, Welch gathered 11 of these anguished, lonely conservatives for a two-day meeting on the problem. America was already a quarter of the way to falling "like overripe fruit" into the hands of the Soviet Union, thanks to secret Communist dissemination of seductive yet poisonous concepts like "civil rights"—which make people think they're supporting something nice, when they're really being duped into an effort to establish a

totalitarian central government (Mao, Welch helpfully pointed out, had conquered China through just such a sugared lie: the slogan "agrarian reform")—and the welfare state, which acclimates people to a government paternalism that will by turns come to enslave them.

Welch proceeded to explain what he was going to do about it. The group would organize 1 million Americans for the task of exposing this truth—a simple act of mass pedagogy, he was convinced, would stop the conspiracy in its tracks. The name Welch gave the organization, the John Birch Society, was cen-

Do the John Birch Society and Ralph Nader have anything in common?

tral to this touchingly naive, if a bit touched, theory. John Birch was an American missionary and spy killed by Communists in China after World War II—killed, Welch argued, for stumbling upon the Red plan to take over the world. He was the first casualty of the Cold War. Had he survived to expose the scheme—well, then the Red advance would have stopped then and there.

His explanation was, to be sure, rather unusual. But followers were spellbound. The Republican Party was in shambles after bad losses in 1958 and 1960. Conservatism's profile in American polemical culture was at an all-time low. And for conservatives,

Continued on page 37